

RECENT LITERATURE.

I.

A BOSTON SCHOOL FORTY YEARS AGO.*

Those who have read "Little Men"—and in these days of cheap editions, who has not—have doubtless often wondered if there ever was or could be a school like Plumfield, and have probably long ere this decided that the dear home-school was, as the saying goes, too good to be true, and existed only in Miss Alcott's fertile imagination. Few, perhaps, were aware that nearly forty years ago a book appeared in Boston giving a description of the original Plumfield, the very school which suggested many of the best scenes in "Little Men." Of this work a third edition has just appeared, on the proposal of Miss Alcott. This book doubtless serves to explain much that seems unlikely or incomprehensible in the story of the Plumfield children, but we cannot imagine that any but the most enthusiastic admirers of Mr. Alcott, who must also be the possessors of his unlimited patience, will care to wade through the three hundred pages that his quondam assistant has filled with dry descriptions of his plans, his system, and what we may term, more expressively than elegantly perhaps, his educational 'fads.' We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to as brief an account of the contents of the book as will serve to give the reader a fair insight into the peculiar regime adopted by Mr. Alcott.

The *Record of Mr. Alcott's School* is the work of a lady assistant of Mr. Alcott, who tells us in her preface to the original edition that "being led, by her confidence in his general principles, to look with interest upon the details of his instruction, she found that so much of children's minds were brought out upon moral and intellectual subjects in words, that she was induced to keep a record by way of verifying to herself and others the principles acted upon." The book is, however, something more than a mere record. And fortunately so. A diary is not at any time the most cheerful of reading; but for deadly dullness, and an all too fatal absence of interest we can recommend anyone in search of such commodities to the record proper of the proceedings in Mr. Alcott's moral hot-house. The volume is divided into five parts, under the respective headings:—Plans, Journal of the School, Self Analysis, Conclusion, and Explanatory. Of these parts the journal, or record proper, as we have termed it, extends over more than half of the entire book, of which the Plans form perhaps the most readable portion.

In September, 1834, the chronicler tells us, Mr. Alcott reopened his school in Boston, after four years' interval, at the Masonic Temple. Where he had carried it on previously, when he first opened it, and how he first picked up his singular ideas on the subject of education, we are not informed. With the brief preliminary information contained in the opening paragraph of the book the writer plunges at once into a description of the school-room. As there certainly never was such a school-room before, and probably not since, we do not hesitate to quote this description at length:—

"Conceiving that the objects which meet the senses every day for years must necessarily mould the mind, he chose a spacious room, and ornamented it, not with such furniture as only an upholsterer can appreciate, but with such forms as would address and cultivate the imagination and heart. In the four corners of the room, therefore, he placed, upon pedestals, busts of Socrates, Shakspeare, Milton, and Scott; and on a table, before the large gothic window by which the room is lighted, the image of Silence, with his finger up, as though he said, Beware." Opposite this window was his own desk, whose front is the arc of a circle. On this he placed a small figure of a child aspiring, (whatever that may be.) Behind was a very large bookcase, with closets below, a black tablet above, and two shelves filled with books. A fine cast of Christ in basso-relievo, fixed into this bookcase, is made to appear to the scholars just over the teacher's head. The bookcase itself is surmounted with a bust of Plato. On the northern side of the room, just opposite the door, was the table of the assistant, with a small figure of Atlas bending under the weight of the world. On a small bookcase behind the assistant's chair were placed figures of a child reading and a child drawing. Some old pictures, one of Harding's portraits, and several maps were hung on the walls. The desks for the scholars, with conveniences for placing all their books in sight, and with black tablets hung over them, which swing forward when they wish to use them, are placed against the wall round the room, so that when in their seats for study no scholar need look at another. . . . Mr. Alcott sat behind his desk, and the children were placed in chairs in a large arc around him; the chairs so far apart that they could not easily touch each other."

Such were the surroundings in which Mr. Alcott carried on his educational experiments, so successfully, his daughter tells us, that the truths he taught have, for thirty years, been silently, helpfully living in the hearts and memories of the pupils, who never have forgotten the influences of that time and teacher. Briefly Mr. Alcott's theories may be summed up as follows:—Education must be moral, intellectual, and spiritual, as well as physical, from the very beginning of life. In teaching his aim was not merely to convey information, but also to exercise the reasoning faculties of the child, to elicit from him his own opinions, and to cultivate the habit of analysis. Thus one favourite method with him was to converse with his pupils and by a series of questions to lead them to come to conclusions for themselves upon moral conduct in various particulars; teaching them how to examine themselves, and to discriminate between their animal and spiritual natures, or their outward and inward life, and showing them how the inward moulds the outward. Much time was also given to explaining the philosophy of Expression (we hope Mr. Alcott did not use the term to his ten year olds), that sculpture, painting, and words are only different modes of expression; and to exercising the faculty of putting ideas into language—of course all this in addition to the more usual kind of instruction given to children of a tender age. So far few will have any fault to find with his

system; but in addition to all this he indulges in a number of what we appropriately termed "fads." A boy does wrong. He punishes the culprit by forcing him to administer corporal punishment to his master; and then would have us believe that "this is the most complete punishment that a master ever invented;" and that there was "not a boy in school but what (sic) would a great deal rather be punished himself than punish him." Either Mr. Alcott's boys must have been of an extraordinarily fine cast, the mould for which has long since been broken; or else they were the most consummate little hypocrites the world ever produced. Another of Mr. Alcott's peculiarities is the tinge of transcendentalism which is visible throughout his ideas as set forth by his chronicler. We spoke just now of spiritual education. Most people would agree in a definition of spiritual education as the education, the raising up to a higher tone, of the spiritual faculties of man. But this hardly would seem to be what Mr. Alcott means. Unfortunately, too, we are not told what he does mean, but are left to evolve his idea from obscure jargon such as the following:—"as if any full, complete, and lively intellectual culture could take place without constant reference, on the part both of teacher and of pupil, to that spiritual nature, a consciousness of which precedes the development of the understanding, and is to outlive and look back on the greatest attainments of natural science, as the child looks back on his picture alphabet from the height of communion with the highest expression of genius in human language."

We think we have gone far enough into the information given by the *Record of a School*, to allow the reader as deep an insight as he will care for into the mysteries of Mr. Alcott's system. Notwithstanding the success which, his daughter tells us, it achieved, we are not inclined to believe that its general adoption would lead to any practical benefit. And as our educational system is confessed to be, we prefer it to Mr. Alcott's. As to the book itself we doubt very much the wisdom displayed in republishing it. Coming in connection with, and after Miss Alcott's charming stories of little folk, it is a disappointment—a valley of dry bones after a land of green meadows and fruitful trees.

II.

THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE.†

In a large octavo volume of nearly eight hundred pages the Harpers have issued the proceedings, speeches, and other documents of the sixth general conference of the Evangelical Alliance, held in New York in October last. The editorial supervision of the work—a labour of great magnitude and involving much skill and patient toil—was confided by the Programme Committee to the Rev. Dr. Schaff, Honorary and Acting Corresponding Secretary of the United States Alliance, and to the Rev. Dr. Prim, General Secretary of the Conference, the latter taking charge of the general arrangement of the volume, and the former the charge of the papers delivered before the Conference, their classification, etc. In addition to the essays and orations delivered before the Conference, the book contains a historical sketch of the circumstances which led to the Conference being held in New York, together with a number of documents relating to the Association, and portraits and biographical notices of the three members of the Conference since deceased, viz: the Rev. Antonio Carrasco and Prof. César Pradier, who were lost with the "Ville du Havre," and the Rev. Emile F. Cook, who died in January at Hyères. The volume is full of matter of the deepest interest to all concerned in the welfare of Evangelicism, and will doubtless meet with the full measure of success which it deserves. We notice that the Messrs. Harper are bringing out the work at their own risk, without any expense to the Alliance. Members and friends of the Alliance will, we trust, take a note of this fact, and endeavour to their utmost to ensure a return to the publishers for their liberality and enterprise in this matter.

RECEIVED.

The Life and Death of John of Barneveld: John Lothrop Motley. New York: Harper & Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

REMARKABLE MEMORIES.

Gregory de Feinaigle published—as no doubt his predecessors did, though times *edax rerum*, has devoured their paper—a prospectus of practical success. In this advertisement M. le Maire, of the seventh *arrondissement*, gives an account of an examination, after two days' instruction by M. Feinaigle, of some half dozen children about ten years old, to M. le Councillor d'Etat, Prefect of the Department of the Seine. One of these unfortunate infants is said to have given the names of all the principal towns in Europe with their degrees of longitude and latitude. Another repeated a hundred decimal places, part of a conclusion arrived at by a member of the Academy of St. Petersburg as to the relation of the diameter to the circumference. Another made a classification of the first book of the Civil Code, with its divisions and titles, chapters and sections, giving the subject of each. All these wretched ones invariably answered with smiling faces and without hesitation, or at the most after an instant's reflection. But the most extraordinary case is the last. In this a child "le jeune Chevrier, âgé de 10 ans"—his name certainly deserves, for his own memory, to be remembered—made an exposition of Jussieu's Botanical System. After dividing it into its three parts of acotyledons, monocotyledons, and dicotyledons, the child divided these each into fifteen classes, and each class into families; each family bore a name which alone would have been sufficient to frighten any ordinary child, but the young Chevrier, like a second Maseppa, urged his way undismayed through *Orobranchoides*, *Rhinotoides*, *Acanthoides*, *Convolvulacées*, *Polemonacées*, &c., explaining politely at intervals when called upon. Later on we read that even M. le Maire was astonished. After this success M. Feinaigle certainly deserved that increase of subscribers which his pamphlet touches on cursorily and with a side wind of signification. Such instances of remarkable memory, generally suppose to be assisted by mnemotechny, have been given from the time of Cicero, who concludes

that memory is not therefore of the heart, blood, brain, or atoms; whether of air or fire he is not, like the rest, ashamed to say he is ignorant; he undertakes, however, to swear that it is divine, having regard to such men as Cineas, the ambassador of Pyrrhus, who saluted the senate and all the people by their names the second day after his arrival at Rome; of Theodectes, the disciple of Aristotle; and of Hortensius, a man of his own time. We have most of us heard of Joseph Scaliger, who learnt the twice twenty-four books of the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" in three weeks; of Avicenna, who repeated by heart the whole of the Koran at the age of ten; of Lipsius, who was willing to recite the histories of Tacitus word for word, giving any one leave to plunge a dagger into his body if he made a mistake—an idle license, for few would have cared to run the resultant risk; of the youth of Corsica of good appearance, mentioned by Murinus, who recited all the barbarous words the latter had written till he was tired of writing, and stopped at last, as it was necessary to stop somewhere, while the youth, like Oliver, asked for more. "Certainly," says Muretus, "he was no boaster, and he told me he could repeat in that way 36,000 words. For my own part I made trial of him after many days, and found what he said true." This Corsican, as those others, was no doubt of a soul disdaining silver and gold, or he might have made his fortune by offering his services to an Emperor. Of Frances Suarez, who, after the witness of Strada, could quote the whole of Augustine (the father's works would fill a small library) from the egg to the apple. Of Dr. Thomas Fuller, who could name in order all the signs on both sides of the way from the beginning of Pater-noster-row at Ave Maria-lane to the bottom of Cheapside to Stock's Market, now the Mansion House. Of Magliabochi, whose name is pleasantly and permanently associated with spiders and the proof of the lost MS. Of William Lyon, who for a bowl of punch, a liquor of which he was exceedingly fond, repeated a *Daily Advertiser*, in the morning, which he had read once only, and then in the course of a debauch, over-night. We might extend this paper far beyond its normal dimensions by mention of such names as Jedediah Buxton, who, if his witness be true, could by some strange mnemotechny of his own, multiply 39 figures by 39, without paper, and amused himself when at the theatre by a compilation of the words used by Garrick, and at another time by that of the pots of beer drank during twelve years of his life; of Zerah Colburn, a mere child, of whom there remains on record a testimony that he could tell the number of seconds in fifty-eight years in less time than the question could be written down; or of that prodigy of parts, Pascal, to whom reference was made at the beginning of this paper, who is said to have forgot nothing thought, read, or done during his rational age.—*Cornhill Magazine*.

A TRANSFORMATION AND A TRIUMPH.

M. About writes of the late M. Baulé: "I knew him in 1852 at the Ecole Française at Athens, where he was my senior. The young man of five and twenty had already a history. After quitting the Ecole Normale, he had been *sous-préfet* under Desolmeux, in a Northern department, intrusted with the task of revolutionising a shrewd and conservative population. But he was not proud of this brief campaign, and on the morrow of the second of December he accepted accomplished facts with a good grace. His *début* at Athens was that of a youth whom the laurels of Alcibiades prevented from sleeping. He was a musician, an elegant dancer, and tolerable rider, and much more occupied with the modern world than with Greek archaeology. A queer accident changed the course of his life. His mother, whom he left in Paris, turned up one fine morning at Athens as governess of the young Soutsos. She had accepted this humble position in order to be near her son, without ever thinking that she was killing his prospects as a man of fashion in a little city where the vanities of birth and wealth are all-powerful. I must say that he recovered from the shock in a creditably short time. He shaved off his moustaches, sold his horse, sent his piano back to the man of whom he hired it, broke with the world, and threw himself into archaeology, as a man of less energy would have thrown himself into a well. The Académie des Inscriptions, the guardian of the Ecole d'Athènes, happened to ask for a work on the Acropolis. He undertook it, and was successful. He had the singular good luck to settle the celebrated question of the staircase; which an architect of the name of Titeux had solved *a priori*, without an experimental proof. Titeux maintained that the ancient entrance must have been in the axis of the Propylæa, towards the road from the Piræus. He had even commenced an excavation on the site of the supposed staircase; but he died of the effects of a sunstroke, in the middle of his researches, at the distance of some few feet from the object of his quest. Ernest Baulé recommenced the task on his own account, with no other resources than the modest stipend of 300 francs which France used to pay us monthly. He had to struggle against, not merely the difficulties to enterprise, but also the hostility of the Greek archaeologists, who found fault with him for employing gunpowder, and declared that he was a second Morosini. Never shall I forget his joy and mine, and that of our friend Charles Garnier, the architect of the new Opera-house, the day that he discovered the first steps. From that moment the fortunes of Baulé were made. The French Embassy, the Académie des Inscriptions, the Minister of Public Instruction, M. Fortoul, who had a fancy for archaeology, the Emperor Napoleon III., and King Otto himself, vied with one another in rewarding the young *savant*. He walked, he ran from success to success; and, in the course of a few years, he was Docteur-ès-Lettres, Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, Professor of Archaeology at the Bibliothèque Impériale, rich through a lucky marriage, member of the Académie des Inscriptions, and Perpetual Secretary of the Académie des Beaux-Arts."

The number of *bona fide* testimonials—some of them from persons well-known all over the Dominion—which have been received by the proprietors of the Diamond Rheumatic Cure, are a sufficient guarantee of the real efficacy and sterling value of this remarkable remedy. In all cases of Rheumatism and kindred complaints it is an infallible cure. No surgery, no vessel, and no dwelling house should be without it. Full particulars on last page.

* Record of Mr. Alcott's School, Exemplifying the Principles and Methods of Moral Culture. Third Edition, Revised. Boston: Roberts Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

† History, Essays, Orations, and other Documents of the Sixth General Conference of The Evangelical Alliance, held in New York, October 2-12, 1873. Edited by Rev. Philip Schaff, D.D., and Rev. S. Irenæus Prime, D.D. Cloth, 8vo., pp. 778. New York: Harper & Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros.