

Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.

THE SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLMASTERS OF CHARLES DICKENS.

III.

INDIVIDUALITY, IDIOSYCRASY AND PRIVATE TUITION.

Whatever we may think of the personality of Mr Squeers, of Mr. Creakle, or of Doctor Blimber and Mr. McChoakemchild, we find that Dickens is only pointing his pencil for a still more graphic sketch of the Schoolmaster proper, a sort of Eugene Aram, (in his criminal aspect) but a more perfect picture, depicting the lesson that no amount of "square-headedness," no elaboration of system, no ambition, (purely selfish) can control human passion; but this, even when encased within scholastic armour, will, eventually, burst its bonds and end in disaster and destruction.

Individuality of character may be a great power, but is not necessarily a safe one. In illustration, let us take the character of Bradley Headstone in "Our Mutual Friend." His picture is intensely graphic. He is the master of a model school, with all the "modern appliances." He is "decent" in his respectability and respectable in his decency, but rather too "square" at the best. Here is his picture:—

"Bradley Headstone, in his decent black coat, and decent white shirt, and decent formal black tie, and decent pantaloons of pepper and salt, and decent silver watch, with a decent hair guard, looked a thoroughly decent young man of six and twenty. He had acquired mechanically a great store of teachers' knowledge. He could do mental arithmetic mechanically, sing at sight mechanically, blow various wind instruments mechanically, even blow the church organ mechanically. From his early childhood up his mind had been a place of mechanical stowage. The arrangements of his wholesale warehouse, so that it might be always ready to meet the demands of retail dealers—history here, geography there, astronomy to the right, political economy to the left, natural history, the physical sciences, figures, music, the lower mathematics and what not, all in their several places—this process of assortment had imparted to his countenance a look of care; while the habit of questioning and being questioned had given him a suspicious manner, as of one lying in wait. He seemed always uneasy lest anything should be missing from his mental warehouse, and taking stock to reassure himself."

This great machine and warehouse of a schoolmaster takes an interest in and patronizes a pupil teacher in a back alley school of the "Jumble" class, where he has been monitor. Of this school Dickens remarks that "the teachers, animated solely by good intentions, had no idea of execution, and a lamentable jumble was the upshot of their kind endeavours, where in fact,

"Black spirits and white,
"Red spirits and grey,
"Jumbled, jumbled, jumbled,
"Jumbled every day."

"Even in this temple of good intentions, an exceptionally sharp boy, exceptionally determined to learn, might learn something," and in this way it came about that Charley Hexam had learned to be a pupil teacher, and had been received from the "jumble" into a better school. In some visits to the Jumble, Headstone had found him out, and "brought him on."

Now the story is, that the intimacy between the headmaster and his assistant teacher leads to the former's falling in love, after the old headlong fashion, with Lizzy Hexam, the boy's sister, and the passion (which is not reciprocated) leads to a murderous assault upon his more successful rival, and to a determined murder of the witness who detects the crime, with whom he wrestles, throws his victim and himself in the struggle, into a canal, thus adding suicide to his double crime.

A beautiful contrast to this hard, cold, singular man, is the character of Doctor Strong, in "David Copperfield."

"Dr. Strong looked almost as rusty as the tall iron rails and gates outside the house; and almost as stiff and heavy as the great stone urns on the top of the red brick wall. He was in his library with his clothes (not particularly well brushed,) and his hair (not particularly well combed); his knees small unbraced; his long black gaiters unbuttoned; and his shoes yawning."

"Dr. Strong's was an excellent school; as different from Mr. Creakle's as good is from evil. It was very gravely and decorously ordered, and on a sound system; with an appeal in everything to the honour and good faith of the boys, and an avowed intention to rely on their possession of those qualities unless they proved themselves unworthy of it, which worked wonders."

"The Doctor himself was the idol of the whole school," for he was the kindest of men, and had a simple faith which melted stony hearts, and though he was the subject of many impositions he was the object of universal love and reverence."

In his later works Dickens has given us two characters full of "Idiosyncrasy" which illustrate some of the English modes of Private Tuition.

Mr. Mathew Pocket, of Hammersmith, "West of London," affords one example, and the Rev. Horatio Crisparkle, of the good old Cathedral town of Rochester, forms the happy contrast.

Mr. Pocket, whose portrait is to be found in "Great Expectations," was a dilapidated man of the slovenly order. But he was a young looking man in spite of his very grey hair, and perplexed and distraught manner.

"He had been educated at Harrow and Cambridge, where he had distinguished himself; but when he had the happiness of marrying Mrs. Pocket, he impaired his prospects and became a 'Grinder' at his University. After grinding a number of dull blades he left the 'grindstone' and went to London, and maintained his establishment by the help of very moderate resources, and fees from divers young men who 'read' with him, and who lacked opportunities or neglected them."

But Mrs. P. was by no means a "help meet" for such a man, and let the household run to waste and be managed by the servants, whilst she studied heraldry, and was interested only in the movements of the aristocracy, priding herself in a supposed "blue tinge" in her own blood, and breaking out occa-

sionally into violent remonstrance when she thought her dignity was imposed upon.

"Am I?" she would exclaim "grandpapa's granddaughter to be nothing in this house?" causing Mr. Pocket to seize his scalp through his hair by both hands with a jerk which appeared to lift him some inches out of his chair. On cooling down he would let himself down again and become silent. By his aid Mr. Pip was raised from the rough clay of a blacksmith's apprentice to the fine porcelain of a real gentleman.

In his last work, left unfinished on his library table at Gad's Hill on the morning of his death, "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," Dickens gives another sketch of a private tutor of a more robust and healthy character.

"A fresh and healthy portrait the looking-glass presented of the Rev. Septimus Crisparkle boxing with great science and prowess, teinting and dodging with the utmost artfulness, and hitting out from the shoulder with the utmost straightness, while his radiant features teem with innocence, and soft-hearted benevolence beams from his boxing-gloves."

"What is prettier than an old lady, (except a young lady) when her eyes are bright, her figure trim and compact, face cheerful and calm, and her dress—like the dress of a China shepherdess—so dainty in its colours, so neatly moulded on her." And so the minor canon thought frequently, as he looked at his long-widowed and comely mother as they sat at breakfast.

Whenever the Reverend Septimus, (who had a difficult charge in his tutelage) fell a musing, the blooming old lady made all haste to the dining-room closet "to produce from it a glass of Constantia and a home-made biscuit," which he never dare refuse; so also the Rev. Septimus yielded himself a willing victim to a nauseous medicine-chest, also presided over by the China Shepherdess—"gentian, peppermint, gilliflowers, sage, parsley, thyme, rue, rosemary, and dandelion," were his portion on the first suspicions of toothache, face ache, or any other ache—and even his filial devotion would lead him, at her behest, to bathe both hands and face in basins of rose leaves and dried lavender, fully convinced of their prophylactic virtues."

The power of this gentle and strong character upon the wild undisciplined *Juniors*, on the careless hero, and upon the dark and devious character, John Jasper, are well handled; and in this literary fragment we have an assurance that our author left his work in his prime, and the cause of education is a loser by his premature death. The instance is, however, a striking one of *Idiosyncrasy* amongst the class of private tutors, who are of course, to a large extent, a self-selected class of men. To return once more to the "school-masters" proper, the tenderest sketch painted in the most loving characters is that of the Poor Schoolmaster in "The Old Curiosity Shop," which we look upon as the "Chef d'Œuvre" of our author. "There was but one old man in a garden before his cottage, and 'little Nell' and her grandfather approached him timidly, for he was the Schoolmaster, and had 'School' written up over his winnows. "He was a pale, simple-looking man, of a spare and meagre habit, and sat among his flowers and bee-hives smoking his pipe in the little porch before his door."

"He had a kind face. In his plain old suit of black, he looked lonely and solitary, and was absorbed in a 'brown study,' but when the weary travellers did get his attention, he sets his simple hospitalities before them and bids them welcome. His eyes wonder off upon the walls, whereon hang some beautiful specimens of penmanship. "Is it yours, sir?" asked little Nell. "Mine?" he returned. "No, I couldn't write like that now a days. They are all done by one hand; a little hand; it is not so old as yours, but a very clever one." Far beyond his companions in his learning and his sports too, how did he ever come to be so fond of me?"

"He stopped and took off his spectacles to wipe them, as if they had grown dim, and tells the child that his favourite scholar is away ill, but he hopes soon to see him back in his place again. "Having given the travellers the shelter of his roof, on retiring to bed he gently asks 'little Nell' to say a prayer that night for a sick child, adding: "It is a little hand to have done all that, and waste away with sickness. It is a very, very little hand!"

"In the morning he learns that the little scholar is worse. At the top of the first form was the vacant place of the sick boy, and on the row of pegs for hats or caps, the first was left empty. No boy attempted to violate the sanctity of seat or peg, but many a one looked from the empty spaces to the schoolmaster and whispered behind his idle neighbour—behind his hand."

"Then began the hum of coming lessons, whispered just and stealthy gings, and all the noise and drawl of school, and in the midst of the din sat the poor schoolmaster, the very image of meekness and simplicity, vainly attempting to fix his mind upon the duties of the day, and to forget his little friend. But his thoughts were rambling from his pupils it was plain, and none knew this better than the eldest boys, who took the grossest advantage of his abstraction to play their boldest tricks."

"Oh, how some of these idle fellows longed to be shady; what rebellious thoughts of the cool river, of the shady bathing places, and the dim woods, would rush upon their minds, tempting them to rush out and become savages from that time forth; or wishing to be a whale, or a titlbat, or a fly, or anything but a boy at school on that hot broiling day. When the clock had struck twelve, "I think, boys," said the schoolmaster, "I shall give an extra half-holiday this afternoon, but you must promise me first that you will not be noisy—at least on the green. I'm sure you wouldn't disturb your old playmate and companion." There was a general murmur of assent, and "Thankee, Sir," "Yess, Sir," "Good-bye, Sir." But the burst from school to joyous nature on such a day was more than boys could bear, and with wild whoop and halloo, they chased each other across the green, laughing and shouting as they went."

"It's natural, thank Heaven," said the schoolmaster. "I'm glad they didn't mind me."

They visit the sick child, women are watching round, and old Dame West crying very bitterly, wringing her hands and rocking to and fro.

"Oh, dame," said the schoolmaster, "is it so bad as this?"

"He's going fast," cried the old woman; "my grandson's dying—it's all along of you. You shouldn't see him now only for his being so earnest on it. This is what his learning has brought him to. O, dear, dear, dear, what can I do?"

"Don't say I am in any fault, Dame. You are in great

distress of mind, and do not mean what you say. I am not hurt."

"He takes his seat beside the child, and whispers his name. The boy throws his wasted arms round his neck, crying out that he was his dear kind friend. "I hope I always was—I meant to be, God knows," said the poor schoolmaster. In the silence that ensued, the hum and shout of the boys at play upon the green, came floating through the open window."

"He took a handkerchief from his pillow, and not having power to wave it, asked the schoolmaster to wave it at the window and tie it to the lattice. "Some of them may see it there and think of me and look this way." The two old friends and companions—for such they were—though they were man and child, held each other in a long embrace, the little scholar took a wistful glance at the fluttering signal, at his idle bat, and slate and book, turned his face towards the wall, and fell asleep."

"The poor schoolmaster sat in the same place, holding the same small cold hand in his, and chafing it."

"It was but the hand of a dead child—he felt that, but he chafed it still, and could not lay it down."

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THE LATE BARON LYTTON.

On another page will be found a portrait of the late Baron Lytton, who died on the 18th ult., leaving behind him a name which will live to all time in the annals of literature and statesmanship. As poet, novelist, dramatist, essayist and statesman, Lord Lytton distinguished himself alike by his brilliant parts and his unwearied industry, the fruits of which he has left as a rich heritage to posterity.

Of Lord Lytton's career we gave a brief account in an obituary notice which appeared in our last issue. We shall therefore content ourselves with a glance at the distinguished roles he played in the worlds of literature and politics. Already in early life he gave indication of his literary tastes, and in 1820, when only fifteen years of age, appeared in print as the author of "Ismael," an Oriental tale. His next success was achieved at Cambridge, where five years later he carried off the Chancellor's medal with his English poem on "Sculpture." The following year he published in Paris, for private circulation, a collection of poems and aphorisms entitled "Weeds and Wild Flowers," and in 1827 a tale in verse, "O'Neil, or the Rebel," and "Falkland," a love story in one volume, both anonymously. His first great work of fiction was "Pelham, or the Adventures of a Gentleman," of which it is related that the M.S. which had been rejected by the publisher's reader, was read by the publisher himself, who at once issued the work in three volumes, and dispatched a check for £500 to the young novelist. This was in 1827. "Pelham" was followed by "The Disowned," in 1828; "Deveraux," in 1829; and "Paul Clifford," in 1830. In 1831 appeared a satirical poem, "The Siamese Twins," and "Milton." In 1832 he published "Eugene Aram," and in 1833 "Godolphin," and "England and the English," a series of witty sketches of national manners. About this time Bulwer succeeded Campbell, as editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, to which he contributed a series of papers which were subsequently published under the title of "The Student." Soon after this came "The Pilgrims of the Rhine," followed, after a tour in Italy, by "The Last Days of Pompeii," and "Rienzi," the latter in 1835. In the same year appeared "Leila; or, the Siege of Granada," and "Calderon the Courtier." In the following year Bulwer made his first essay as a dramatist, with "The Duchess of La Valliere," a play in five acts, which met with little success. He next made his appearance as a historical writer, with "Athens, its Rise and Fall," of which two volumes were published in 1836. His next work was a novel, "Ernest Maltravers," which appeared in 1837, and a sequel to which, under the title of "Alice, or the Mysteries," was published in 1838. Towards the close of this year Mr. Bulwer and John Herschel were created baronets on the occasion of the coronation of Her Majesty. In this year also he made his second attempt as a dramatist, and produced the five-act comedy, "The Lady of Lyons," which not only achieved a brilliant success at the time, but has retained its hold of the stage ever since. "Richelieu" came out in 1839; "The Sea Captain," in five acts, in 1839; "Money," in five acts, in 1840; and, after a long interval, the comedy of "Not so bad as we seem," in five acts, written for amateur performance in 1851, as a benefit for the "Guild of Literature and Art,"—the idea of which is said to have originated during a visit paid to Sir Edward's mansion at Knebworth by several literary celebrities and artists. Having conceived the notion of a journal which should combine scientific information with politics and general literature, he, in conjunction with Sir D. Brewster and Dr. Lardner, commenced a periodical in the early part of 1841, founded upon this design, entitled *The Monthly Chronicle*; but it was too scientific to suit the public taste of the day, and, after a few months' existence, its projector retired from it, dissatisfied with the result. During his connection with this organ, he contributed to its political section a remarkable "Historical Review of the State of England and Europe at the Accession of Queen Victoria," on which M. Guizot bestowed the highest commendation. In the same year Sir Edward resumed his career as a novelist, by the production of "Night and Morning." This was succeeded, in 1842, by "Zanoni," "the well-loved work," to use the author's own words, "of his mature manhood." About the same time he published a volume of poetry, entitled "Eva, and the Ill-omened Marriage," since incorporated, with considerable additions, in the complete edition of his poetical works. Not long after the cessation of his first parliamentary labours, in 1841, Sir E. Bulwer travelled in Germany, and devoted himself to the study of its language and its rich stores of literature, when he collected materials for a life of Schiller, the especial object of his admiration, and availed himself of this information in the biography of that great writer which he appended to the first edition of his translation of the "Poems and Ballads of Schiller," in 1844. "The Last of the Barons," his next essay in romance, appeared early in 1843. At the close of this year Sir Edward lost his mother, and succeeding to her valuable estates of Knebworth, &c., he, in compliance with her will, changed his name, taking the historic surname of Lytton, by royal licence, in addition to his patronymic, Bulwer. The effects of unremitting toil having seriously affected his health, he was induced to try the hydropathic system, in the year 1845; and in a sparkling letter to W. Harrison Ainsworth, published as the "Confessions of a Water Patient," he made known his impressions and opinions of the