

[Written for Moore's Rural New Yorker]

"THE PARENT-SIDE IN THE WORK OF EDUCATION."

In the RURA of Dec. 10, continuing the report of a recent meeting of "The American Institute of Instruction" at Bedford, Mass., I note the above as one of the topics of that occasion, and I believe it to be one which ought to be discussed and acted upon, not only in public educational gathering, but also in our school districts, and in our home circles.

The subject is, indeed, one of no little importance. The very words which compose it imply whole volumes of instruction which should be sown broadcast throughout our entire land. Our Common Schools are, emphatically, the rock—the foundation of our government; for there is the youthful mind moulded into shape and developed,—there it receives its first and lasting impressions of good or evil,—there are formed those habits of person and of character which follow their possessor through life, and which fail not to point out the *sluggard*, the *villain*, or the *MAN*. When we contemplate the subject in its immediate bearing on our Common Schools, and, consequently, on the welfare of our youth and the nation, we become the more convinced of the almost vital importance of a just conception of its true idea. Our educational system has now arrived at a point where the light of true intelligence begins to manifest itself. The time has already come when the "poor pedagogue" is no longer looked upon as "a necessary evil," to be tolerated with impatience; but he is ranked with the real philanthropists of our land, and takes his stand on equal terms with the philosopher and the divine. Praise be to the founders of that system which has brought the teacher to his noble position, and which is continually working throughout the mass, like leaven in the loaf, raising the standard of teachers' qualifications to a still higher degree of perfection.

Parents, it is true, have done much for the advancement of this educational reform; but, parents, much yet remains for you to do. Your interest in the great cause does not end in perfecting the teacher. No; it is with your child, and follows your child through life. It is linked with his very being, and ceases not even when he arrives at the age of manhood and starts forth to battle with the trials and vicissitudes of life.

"But," you ask, "what more can I do, when I have provided my child with a capable and costly teacher?" You can do much in a hundred ways. Begin, by inculcating in the mind of your child a generous spirit of study,—make him to understand, and in part, to realize the great importance of acquiring knowledge. Furnish him with good moral newspapers, and with histories, with which he may pleasantly pass away the long winter evenings, remembering that "reading is the way to all knowledge." Teach him the duty of obedience. Provide comfortable rooms for your schools, and furnish them with maps and historical drawings, to which the teacher may, most advantageously, refer during the several recitations. And, lastly, visit scholars and teachers often, while at their work and thus, by

giving countenance to the educational schools, encourage them to move patiently, trustingly onward, till they shall have reached the goal in triumph. If your noble cot goes to be trained and disciplined by one whom you love, you visit him almost daily. Will you then care less for the education of your own child? He is possessed of an immortal soul, to live through all eternity. Take the question home to your own calm judgments and decide. That man or woman must needs be more than human, to whom you would confide the sole care and trust of your own child. Think, then, what may be done on "The Parent-Side in the Work of Education," and let every energy bend to the work. Spare no sacrifice on your own part which shall secure to your child a good name, and a character beyond reproach.

TEACHER.

Schuyler Co., N. Y., 1860.

WHAT SHALL WE TEACH, AND HOW?

It is characteristic of our American people to drive ahead in all the departments of life; and it is this go-ahead principle which makes us the enterprising nation that we are. Yet even this, like all other things, may be over-done; in fact, in many instances we do need restraint. There is no other department in the various missions of humanity in which extremism is so fraught with disastrous results, as in the teaching of children. Parents are superficial, and in looking for the main chance, and delving hard to rapidly accumulate gold,—to rear splendid residences, and appear in costly equipages,—neglect their own moral and intellectual culture; and, as a consequence, the proper education of their children is totally overlooked. The Teacher who will drive the child fastest—makes the greatest display, by storing the mind with the greatest number of studies—is their model teacher, and, of course, commands the highest remuneration. Teachers, knowing the facts—acquainted with the weakness of their patrons—seek to flatter their vanity, thereby advancing themselves in the favor of their employers. As one who delights in the instruction of the young, I call upon my fellow teachers to reflect upon the consequences of such an extravagant career. Behold you of the importance of your mission—look at the precious gem before you,—the immortal mind, Nature's crowning element, placed in your hands to mould, making you the agent of morality and virtue—placing in your possession the casket of seeds for future usefulness and happiness. It is of paramount importance, then, that you sow them judiciously.

But to our question, How shall they be sown?—or, what shall they be taught? Even though it be to secure the approbation and patronage of the most influential, do not forget to instruct your pupils in the most thorough manner. Commencing at the foot of the Hill of Science, make sure and steadfast every step of the advancing scholar. Let each branch be taught, as though it were of the highest importance. The greatest fault in teaching has been a too rapid suc-

cession of studies. The child is hurried from letters to reading,—through all the successive series of readers—and attains such a flippancy of speech and pronunciation, that it is really charming to hear the little fellow go on, especially if he possesses a good development of the perceptive faculties. His slow class-mate even stumbles over the simplest words, but his "quick neighbor" tells him all the harder ones, while neither reads understandingly. In a course of reading, teach thoroughly; have your pupils obtain a clear utterance, then a correct pronunciation. Let not one reading exercise pass, until your class can give the definitions of the most prominent words. Geography is not half learned, and if its importance was more fully realized, it would be taught better than it is. Arithmetic is to be understood, therefore teach it understandingly,—be not in haste to leave the mental for the written,—the simpler branches for higher, but master each in its order. All the higher branches may be taught "with success" in our common schools—providing the rudiments have been learned correctly.

But I fear I have already been too prosy, therefore will leave the subject for the present. In the teachers of our Common Schools, more than any other class of citizens, lies the destiny of our future. As our children are reared so will the next generation be. It is their mission to mould our nationality, to eradicate existing evils, and build an edifice of morality. They should make themselves active and influential reformers. Let their aim be high, their work broad and deep—and they will be crowned with the highest honors of the land, and the just approbation of Heaven.

St. Johnsville, N. Y., 1859.

A FEW FACTS ABOUT CELEBRATED MEN.

Some literary men make good men of business. According to Pope, the principal object of Shakespeare in cultivating literature was to secure an honest independence. He succeeded so well in the accomplishment of this purpose that, at a comparatively early age, he had realised a sufficient competency to enable him to retire to his native town of Stratford-upon-Avon. Chaucer was in early life a soldier, and afterward a commissioner of customs, and inspector of woods and crown lands. Spencer was secretary to the Lord Deputy of Ireland, and is said to have been shrewd and sagacious in the management of affairs. Milton was secretary to the Council of State during the Commonwealth, and gave abundant evidence of his energy and usefulness in that office. Sir Isaac Newton was a most efficient Master of the Mint. Wordsworth was a distributor of stamps; and Sir Walter Scott a clerk to the Court of Session—both uniting a genius for poetry with punctual and practical habits as men of business. Ricardo was no less distinguished as a sagacious banker than a lucid expounder of the principles of political economy. Grote, the most profound historian of Greece, is also a London banker. John Stuart Mill, not surpassed by any living thinker in profundity of specu-