

THE TEACHER'S MISSION.

VERY few teachers but have heard of miseries that exist in this world, and of remedies for them. Now the evils that exist are of two kinds, those that can be remedied and those that cannot. And when the matter is fairly and carefully considered it will be found that the real remedy for remedial evils is in the hands of the teacher. And by teacher is not meant solely the one in the school-house, but all who are able to lift people from lower to higher levels. But as those in the school-house have all the children from five to fifteen years of age daily before them, on them hangs the heaviest responsibilities.

Now it may be that children may assemble with teacher and go forth unable to cope with a the evils that beset them in the street and at home, although they have acquired the power to read; so that in addition to teaching pupils to read is the task of impressing on them that doing the right is the foremost of all things. This is the *teacher's mission*.

George Washington stands before the world as the greatest of all for behaving righteously and wisely while possessing unlimited power. He was left fatherless when eleven years of age; to his dying hour he attributed to the influence of his mother the acquirement of ability to restrain his high temper and to square his conduct according to justice and equity. In the archives of Mount Vernon may be seen a little volume bearing the name of Mary Washington, written by her own hand, and which was held by him as a saintly relic. It is entitled Sir Matthew Hale's Contemplations; from this she daily read to her children. Thus she fulfilled her mission.

It has doubtless not dawned on the minds of a vast number of teachers that they are charged with any other duty than giving instruction in read-

ing and other branches; it is owing to this poor conception of the teacher's work that the jails have to be enlarged at about an equal rate with school-houses. In like manner, so poorly do most mothers conceive of their duty in bringing up children that in few households are such lessons considered important as Mary Washington gave in her home on the banks of the Rappahannock.

Let us propound the inquiry at once: Now, how shall the teacher fulfil her mission? In speaking of Mary Washington reference was designedly made to a small volume which in those days of few books was carefully studied by her. Without attempting to answer the above question in fulness and minuteness a partial answer may be given in the words of Ruskin:

"And I would urge upon every young man, at the beginning, of his due and wise provision for his household to obtain as soon as he can by the severest economy a restricted, serviceable, and steadily (however slowly) increasing series of books for use through life; making his little library, of all the furniture in his room, the most studied and decorative piece, every volume having its assigned place, like a little statue in its niche."

To perform her mission then, the teacher must be the possessor of a library—if may possibly be a small one. To own a library supposes, of course, that it is read; supposes that it is turned to for aid, that the subjects read about are thoughtfully turned over in the mind. It is not expected nor desired to turn the teacher into what is called a great reader; such persons are rarely useful and the teacher aims at advancement and usefulness through his advancement. To read many books means a waste of time, and time is about all we have. If a poor, shallow