

their worst forms, and after their decease he was bound apprentice to a shoemaker, who proving a hard and tyrannical master did not much better his lot. The boy's single possession was one book, a "Treatise on Algebra," but this was a sealed book to him, owing to his ignorance of the elementary principles which would have enabled him to understand it. Happily his master's son had a copy of "Fenning's Introduction," and through reading this by stealth, Gifford was enabled at length to make use of his own volume. Being without pens, ink, and paper, or a farthing to purchase them with, he hit upon the plan of beating out fragments of leather with his hammer, and working the problems upon them with a blunt awl. His progress though slow was solid and real. A ludicrous blunder on the part of a sign painter at length elicited his dangerous talent for satire and versification, which he exercised so cleverly as to win the admiration of the whole town, and, unhappily, to excite the ill-will of his master, who searched the lad's garret, pounced upon his little library, his paper and mathematical diagrams, and rigorously forbade all further application to study. This circumstance, which threatened to overthrow the lad's prospects, and doom him to ignorance, proved the cause of his eventual prosperity. Mr. Cooksley, a surgeon in the town, being struck with the vigour and solidity of the young man's productions, visited him, heard the particulars of his history, and immediately raised a subscription for the purpose of buying up his indentures and releasing him from the tyrannical shoemaker. This liberality was not thrown away. In two years from the time of his release, Gifford had prepared himself to enter the university. The same kind friends sent him to Oxford, where his fine talents and finer industry, enabled him soon to support himself. He gained the regard of Earl Grosvenor, who became his patron, and made him tutor to his son, with whom he made the tour of Europe. On his return to England he devoted his life to literature, and from that time to the day of his death rose in favour and popularity with the public, and gathered honors and emoluments rarely enjoyed by members of the literary profession. The shoemaker's apprentice achieved a reputation of the first rank, became the companion of nobles and statesmen, died in opulent circumstances, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Here, then, are four examples of men who have risen, three of them from the very lowest condition of life, to reputation, honour and emolument. Were it desirable so to do, we might increase the four to forty, and in fact to an indefinite amount beyond that, by extending our researches among the biographies of the living and the dead. Where there is a will, the above narratives shew, there is a way, because a resolute and determined will, wills to make a way for itself and gathers fresh strength from the conflict with opposing obstacles. If it be objected that, of the above examples, three, at least, were helped onward to the goal by other hands, we would reply, that all three of them had really won the prize before they got it; that Stone in his garden, Du Val in his forest, and Gifford in his cobbler's stall, had already fought and won the battle with circumstances, and were worthy of the guerdon they received. Whoever will strive as they strove shall assuredly rise—not, it may well be, to honour equally conspicuous and remarkable—but to a higher level than that from which they start at the outset.

Yet let us not be misunderstood. We adduce the above examples as proofs of what may be done by the diligent use of the faculties given to us by our Creator, not as recommending our readers to aim at social elevation, as the chief end of self-culture. A higher motive should stimulate us in the race; and in viewing success in life, we should ever remember that if it is purchased at the expense of the eternal interests, it is bought too dear. It is well remarked by the writer of "Successful Men of Modern Times,"* and the remark ought to be kept in view by the young reader—that "he who gains a crown of glory which never fades away, and who is admitted to the participation of pleasures which eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard, nor the heart of man conceived, is after all the truly successful man."

"THE CHILD IS FATHER OF THE MAN."

This *dictum* of Wordsworth was never more aptly illustrated than by the following anecdote of Henry Brougham the school boy, which we find in a delicious volume of the reminiscences of the late Lord Cockburn, just published by Adam and Charles Black, with the title "Memorials of his Time, by Henry Cockburn," "Brougham made his first explosion while in Frazer's class (at the High School of Edinburgh.) He dared to differ from Frazer, a hot but good-natured old fellow, on some small bit of Latinity. The master like other men in power, maintained his own infallibility, punished the rebel, and flattered himself that the affair was over. But Brougham reappeared next day, loaded with books, returned to the charge before the whole class, and compelled honest Luke to confess that he was wrong. This made Brougham

famous throughout the whole school. I remember, as well as if it had been yesterday, having had him pointed out to me as 'the fellow who had beat the master.' It was then that I first saw him."

MOTHERS OF GREAT MEN.

Among the mothers of great men, Juliana of Stolberg deserves a foremost place; and few mothers have been able to boast of such illustrious sons as William of Orange, and Lewis, Adolphus, Henry, and John of Nassau. "Nothing (says Mr. Motley) can be more tender or more touching than the letters which still exist from her hand, written to her illustrious sons in hours of anxiety or anguish, and to the last recommending to them, with as much earnest simplicity as if they were still little children at her knee, to rely always, in the midst of the trials and dangers which were to beset their paths through life, upon the great hand of God."

COMPARATIVE VIEW OF AMERICAN SYSTEMS OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.—I. MASSACHUSETTS.

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History of its System.—The Massachusetts Common School System, taken as a whole, and viewed with reference to its origin, its history, its duration, its combination of theoretical and practical excellence, and its results on the intellectual, moral and material interests of that community which has been subjected to its influences, is unquestionably entitled to be regarded as the noblest and most perfect institution of modern times. Its broad and ample foundations were laid more than two hundred years since. Twenty-two years only had elapsed after the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth, when the infant community of New England, still surrounded by innumerable perils, and manfully struggling against all the obstacles and discouragements, incident to the settlement of a new colony, enjoined, through its legislative assembly, or General Court, upon its municipal authorities, the duty of providing for the education of *every child* within their respective jurisdictions; directing them, in the terms of the act of 1642, to "have a vigilant eye over their brethren and neighbors—to see first, that none of them shall suffer so much barbarism in any of their families, as not to endeavour to teach, by themselves or others, their children and apprentices, so much learning as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue, and obtain a knowledge of the capital laws"—that *religious instruction* be given to all children—and "that all parents and masters do breed and bring up their children and apprentices, in some honest, lawful calling, labor or employment, either in husbandry or some other trade, profitable for themselves and the Commonwealth, if they will not, or cannot train them up in learning to fit them for higher employment."

In the event of the neglect of parents and guardians to comply with these requisitions, after due admonition, the magistracy were authorized to take their children or servants from them, and place them where such an education should be given. Five years later, in 1647, a law was enacted providing for the establishment of one school at least, in every town of fifty householders or upward, and an additional or "Grammar School" in every town of one hundred or more families, to be supported entirely at the public expense. Thus a single generation was not permitted to pass, from the settlement of the colony, before complete and adequate provision had been made, by authority of law, for the universal and free education of every future citizen of the Commonwealth; and upon this strong and firm foundation, still rests the noble and magnificent structure of the Massachusetts Free Common-School System!

Its Leading Feature.—The prominent and leading feature of the Massachusetts System of Free Schools, may be regarded as consisting in the enactment, that each and every *township* of the Commonwealth shall, from its own resources, make adequate and ample provision for the complete elementary education of every child within its borders. The electors of the town may delegate this high trust, in part, by the organization of *districts*, the inhabitants and officers of which may carry out, within their jurisdiction, the requisitions of the law, subject to the general supervision and control of the township and its school committee. In point of fact, most of the towns of the State are thus subdivided into districts, each of which has its "prudential committee," generally consisting of one individual, chosen by the electors of the town or district, as may be deemed most expedient by the former, whose special duty it is to provide a suitable school house, with all necessary appurtenances, fuel, &c., for the district, at the expense of its taxable inhabitants, and to employ a suitably qualified teacher. The electors of each town are required annually to raise by tax such sum, not less than one dollar and fifty cents for each child between the ages of four and sixteen, as they may deem expedient, for the support of schools during the current year, exclusive of the

* See a useful volume of the Religious Tract Society's Series, under the above title.