

The Slighted Scholar.

Cases like the one I am about to relate are much too frequent in our country, and they are such, too, as should be guarded against by all who have an interest in education. The incident was brought to mind by hearing a complaint made by the parent of the poor boy, who had been grossly neglected by the teacher of the village school,—neglected simply because he was poor and comparatively friendless.

Many years ago, when I was a small boy, I attended a school in the town of—

Among the scholars there was a boy named George Henry. His father was a poor drinking man, and the unfortunate boy had to suffer in consequence.—George came to school habited in ragged garments—but they were the best he had; he was rough and uncouth in his manners, for he had been brought up in that manner; he was very ignorant, for he had never had an opportunity for education.

Season after season, poor George Henry occupied the same seat in the school room,—it was a back corner seat, away from the other scholars,—and there he thumbed his tattered primer. The ragged condition of his garb gave a homely cast to his whole appearance, and what of intelligence there might have been in his countenance was beclouded by the "outer covering" of the boy. He seldom played with other children, for they seemed to shun him; but when he did, for a while, join with them in their sports, he was so rough that he was soon shoved out of the way.

The teacher passed the poor boy coldly in the street, while the other boys, in better garbs, were kindly noticed. In the school young Henry was coldly treated. The teacher neglected him, and then called him an "idle blockhead," because he did not learn.

The boy received no incentive to study, and consequently he was most of the time idle, and this idleness begat a disposition to while away the time in mischief. For this he was whipped, and the more idle and careless he became. He knew he was neglected by the teacher and simply because he was poor and ragged, and with a sort of sullen indifference, sharpened at times by feelings of bitterness, plodded on in his dark, and thankless way.

Thus matters went on for several years. Most of the scholars who were of George Henry's age had passed on to the higher branches of study, while he, poor fellow, still spelled out words of one and two syllables, and still kept his distant seat in the corner. His father had sunk into the pit of inebriation and the unfortunate boy was more wretched than ever.

The look of clownish indifference which had marked his countenance, was now giving way to a shade of unhappy thought and feeling, and it was evident that the great turning point of his life was at hand. He stood upon the step in life from which the fate of after years must take its cast.

At this time a man by the name of Kelly took charge of the school. He was an old teacher, a careful observer of human nature and a really good man. Long years of guardianship over wild youths had given him a bluff authoritative way, and in his discipline he was strict and unwavering.

The first day he passed in the teacher's desk of our school was mostly devoted to watching the movements of the Scholars, and studying the dispositions with which he had to deal. Upon George Henry his eyes rested with a keen searching glance. But he evidently made little of him during the first day; yet on the second day he did more.

It was during the afternoon of the second day that Mr. Kelly observed young Henry engage in inhaling flies upon the point of a large pin. He went to the boy's seat, and after reprimanding him for his idleness, he took up the dirty, tattered primer from the desk.

"Have you never learned more than is in this book?" asked the teacher.

"No sir," drawled George.

"How long have you attended school?"

"I don't know, sir. It's ever since I can remember."

"Then you must be an idle, reckless boy," said the teacher with much severity. "Do you realize how many years you have thrown away? Do you know how much you have lost? What sort of a man do you think of making, in this way? One of these days you will be too old to go to school, and then while your companions are seeking some honorable employment, you will be good for nothing. Have you parents?"

"Yes sir," answered the boy, in a hoarse voice.

"And do they wish you to grow up to be an ignorant, worthless man?"

The boy hung down his head and was silent, but Mr. Kelly saw two great tears roll down his cheeks. In an instant, the teacher saw that he had something besides an idle, stubborn mind to deal

with, in the ragged scholar before him. He laid his hand on the boy's head, and in a kind tone he said:

"I wish you to stop after school is dismissed.—Do not be afraid, for I wish to assist you if I can."

George looked wonderingly into the master's face for there was something in the tone of the voice, which fell upon his ear that sounded strangely to him, and he thought, too, as he looked around, that the rest of the scholars regarded him with kinder countenances than usual. A dim thought broke in upon his mind, that, from some cause, he was going to be happier than before.

After the school was dismissed, George Henry remained in his seat till the teacher called him to the desk.

"Now," said Mr. Kelly, "I wish to know why it is that you have never learned any more. You look bright, and you look as though you might make a smart man. Why is it that I find you so ignorant?"

"Because nobody ever helps me," replied the boy. "Nobody cares for me, sir, for I am poor."

By degrees the kind hearted teacher got the poor boy's whole history, and while generous tears bedewed his eyes, he said:

"You have been wrongly treated, George—very wrongly; but there is yet time for redemption, I will try to teach you, will you try to learn?"

"Yes—O yes," quickly uttered the boy in earnest tones. "Yes—I should love to learn. I don't want to be a bad boy," he thrillingly added, while his countenance glowed with unwonted animation.

Mr. Kelly promised to purchase books for the boy as fast as he could learn to read them, and when George Henry left the school-room, his face was wet with tears. The scholars, who had remained in the entry, saw him come out and our hearts were warmed towards him. We spoke kindly to him, and walked with him to his house, and his heart was too full for utterance.

On the next day George commenced studying in good earnest, and the teacher helped him faithfully.

As soon as the teacher treated him with kindness and respect, the scholars followed the example, and the result was, that they found in the unfortunate youth, one of the most noble-hearted, generous, accommodating and truthful companions in the world.

Long years have passed since those school-boy days. George Henry has become a man of middle age, and in all the country there is not a man more beloved and respected than he. And all is the result of one teacher's having done his duty.

You who are school teachers, remember the responsibility that devolves upon you. In this country of free schools, there should be no distinction between classes. All are alike entitled to your care and counsel, and the more weak the child, the more earnest should be your endeavor to lift him up and aid him.—*Christian Mirror*.

Prevalent Taste in Reading.

"What a nation of readers we are!" said we, as we seated ourselves in the rail-car, for a short ride into the country. For first, while the cars were at the station, there came in two boys, in hot rivalry, crying, "*Advance Jour'n! Post! Trib'n! N.Y. Pap'rs!*" Only two cents! And almost every man bought a paper—some bought two, and others none; but we noticed that many of these latter had each a book, snugly held under his arm.

Soon the cars started, and then a young man with a bundle of books, came along to sell to any man so unfortunate as to have forgotten to take one from his library or a bookstore, before setting out on his journey. Next the same youth, with his arms full of pamphlet novels, tales, sketches, narratives, and confessions, came for more custom. And, lastly, the same person came once more, with heaps of Magazines, *Putnam's*, *Harper's*, *Ballou's*, *Godey's*, *Peter-son's*, and we know not how many others.

Every time he passed through the car he sold something, and when we arrived at the first station, we had the curiosity to look up and see how many were reading. Almost all had a book, paper, magazine, pamphlet, or something of the kind, and all were reading as if for dear life itself. "We are a nation of readers, surely!" thought we. "But what do we read?"

Ah, that is the question, and a very pertinent question it is; one that demands a candid consideration. What do we read? For every body reads, from the college professor, grave and dignified with his masterly Latin and Greek Epics, his fat, coarse-paper, red-edged German Treatises, and his clean and neat American Quarterly and European Reviews; down to the hackney coach driver who sits reading the *erald* on his carriage at the station, while