

THE PURITAN SCHOOL.

A BELIEF THAT SPARING THE ROD SPOILED THE CHILD.

Many Ingenious Methods Devised to Torture the Disobedient Scholar—The Rod and the Ferrule in Frequent Demand—Favorite Studies.

Great attention was paid to penmanship. Spelling was taught if the "writing" were only fair and flowing. I have never read of any criticism of teachers by either parents or town officers save in the one question of writing. How deeply children were versed or grounded in the knowledge of the proper use of "Simme colings not of interio-gations peorids and commoes" I do not know. A boundless freedom apparently was given, as was also in orthography—if we judge from the letters of the times.

The school houses were simple dwellings, often tumbling down and out of repair. The Roxbury teacher wrote in 1681:

"Of inconveniences [in the school-house] I shall mention no other but the confused and shattered and nasty posture that it is in, not fitting for to reside in, the glass broke, and thereupon very raw and cold; the floor very much broken and torn up to kindle fires, the hearth spoiled, the seats some burned and out of kilter, that one had well nigh as good keep school in a hog stie as in it.

This schoolhouse had been built and furnished with some care in 1652.

"The feoffes agreed with Daniel Welde that he provide convenient benches with forms, with tables for the scholars, and a convenient seate for the schoolmaster a Deske to put the Dictionary on and shelves to lay up books.

The schoolmaster "promised and engaged to use his best endeavour both by precept and example to instruct the Scholasticall morall and Theological discipline the children so far as they be capable all A. B. C. Darians accepted." He was paid in corn, barley or peas, the value of 25 pounds per annum, and each child through his parents or guardians furnished half a cord of wood for the schoolhouse fire. If this load of wood were not promptly furnished the child suffered, for the master did not allow him "the benefit of the fire"; that is, to go near enough to feel the warmth.

The children of wise parents like Cotton Mather, were also taught "official and beneficial sciences" such as the mystery of medicine—a mystery indeed in colonial times.

Puritan schoolmasters believed, as did Puritan parents, that sparing the rod spoiled the child, and great latitude was given in punishment; the rod and rule were fiercely and frequently plied, as in English schools of the same date. When young men were publicly whipped in colleges, children were sure to be well trained in smaller schools. Master Lovel, that tigerish Boston master, whipped the culprit with birch rods, and forced another scholar to hold the sufferer on his back. Others whipped on the soles of the feet, and one teacher roared out, "Oh, the Catiffs, it is good for them." Not only were children whipped, but many ingenious instruments of torture were invented. One teacher made his scholars sit on a "bark seat turned upside down with his thumb on the knot of a floor." Another master of the inquisition invented a unipod—a stool with one leg—sometimes placed in the middle of the seat, sometimes on the edge, on which the unfortunate scholar tiresomely balanced. Others sent out the suffering pupil to cut a branch of a tree, and making a split in the large end of the branch, sprung it on the culprit's nose, and he stood painfully pinched, an object of ridicule with his spreading branch of leaves. One cruel master invented also an instrument of torture which he called a "flapper." It was a heavy piece of leather six inches in diameter with a hole in the middle, and was fastened at the edge to a pliable handle. The pain inflicted by this brutal instrument can well be imagined. At another school, whipping of unlucky wights was done "upon a peaked block with a tattling," and this expression of colonial severity seems to take on an additional force and cruelty in our minds that we do not at all know what a tattling stick was, nor understand what was meant by a peaked block—Alice Morse Earle in Independent.

A Common-Sense Crusade.

By way of protest against the manifest inconvenience of wearing a long and trailing skirt on the highway, an association of sensible young women in Nottingham, England, have adopted the fashion of short petticoats for their walks abroad. The illustration shows how independently a girl may fare through mud and slush with skirts several inches above her ankles. The women of England are persuading fashionable tailors to make short costumes for their out-door expeditions nativ and trim, and finished with a facing of leather easily cleansed when splashed. This costume requires a well fitting boot, since it necessarily leaves the foot exposed to view. It is to be hoped that the day of short skirts for out-door wear will soon dawn for all healthy women.

For the drawing-room nothing is so beautiful as the trained skirt. It conveys with it the traditions of the past, when queens stepped proudly over palace floors. Every fair woman is a queen in her own right, and her sweeping garments emphasize her stateliness in the house. But on a sloppy city street, or an abysmal rural road, what so forlorn as the lady clutching frantically at her dignity and the hem of her best gown, and vainly trying to keep up with her more fortunate brother or husband in the race of life?

We must admit that the Nottingham reformers are a trifle in advance of what is absolutely needful. Reformers are apt to be a little too radical. Nevertheless, we congratulate them on their courage and their common-sense, longing as we do to see thousands emulating their example here in free America.—Harper's Bazar.

A Simple Experiment.

A neat little experiment in electricity is to soak half a sheet of stout foolscap paper in water, drying it rapidly before a fire, spreading it while warm on a varnished table or dry woolen cloth and then rubbing the surface sharply with a piece of india rubber. The paper becomes so electrified that it will stick to a smooth wall or looking-glass, or attract bits of tissue-paper like a magnet, and on being laid upon a japanned tea-tray which is stood upon three thoroughly dry goblets will cause the tray to give out sparks at a touch of the finger.

QUEER AND CURIOUS.

The Minute Ridges on Finger Tips Furnish a Means of Identification.

Mr. Galton devotes his life to the elucidation of the queer and the curious. Undoubtedly there is nothing a man masters which is not of some benefit to his fellows, though centuries may elapse before the application comes. In this present volume Mr. Galton gives the results of a number of years of research, devoted to those tiny ridges of skin which appear in the ends of the fingers. They are the so-called "papillary" ridges. Carried away by his enthusiasm, Mr. Galton declares that these markings "are in some respects the most important of all anthropological data." He makes, too, the statement that they "have the unique merit of retaining all their peculiarities unchanged through life, and afford in consequence an incomparably surer criterion of identity than any other bodily feature.

The presence of these minute ridges on the finger tips became the subject of physiological study long ago. Strangely enough, they are perfectly defined in monkeys, but appear "in a much less advanced stage in other mammals." We know that the finger tips are studded with pores. There are an infinite number of mouths always open which lead to ducts that secrete perspiration. The ridges must assist touch, as they "help in the discrimination of the character of surfaces that are variously rubbed as held between the fingers. These ridges are visible in the child unborn; they increase with the growth of the individual, and are sharply defined until old age sets in. Moderate work develops them, and they are visible on the toes. They are fairly developed in the hands of ladies." The ensuing statement used by Mr. Galton is not fortunate, for he adds that "they are not visible on fingers of idiots of the lowest type, who are incapable of laboring at all."

What Mr. Galton wants to show is that through the prints made by the finger tips we have an absolute method of identification. A to that, stupid thing, palmistry, our authority says it has no more significance than have the creases on old clothes. The ridges Mr. Galton divides into three categories of arches, loops, and whorls, and his book abounds in curious pictures of finger prints, magnified by means of the camera. It seems to us to be terribly complex. As no two persons' fingertips are considered to be alike, and as there is individualism in the fingers of the right and left hand, and there are ten fingers in all, there would have to be ten distinct examinations before an identification could be positive.

When one comes to the real practical use of the finger-mark method it seems to have none. If there be any reliance to be put in it as a means of identification it would require an expert having uncommon powers of observation. When we are told that there are "about thirty-five points (of resemblance) situated on the bulb of each of the ten digits, in addition to more than 100 on the ball of the thumb," it may be seen how troublesome the matter is likely to be. Then, as one has to work up over a thousand points on his own hands, or on somebody else's hands, hours, days and weeks might elapse before anything like a conclusion could be reached. Scientifically, when further treated, the subject may be of minor interest; practically, it has none at all. The book, of course, shows that diligence and hard work which are common to everything Mr. Galton does, but, really, "the play is not worth the candle."—Literary col. N. Y. Times.

Scientific Jots.
The celebrated high electric light mast at Minneapolis, which is 257 feet high, has proved ineffective for lighting purposes, and is now no longer used.

One of the latest inventions in connection with the application of electricity to street car service is a self lubricating gear for trolleys, which needs no attention after being once put in operation.

Carbonic acid gas, which is ejected in large quantities from the earth, is being utilized in several localities. At Burgbrohl, near Coblenz, a carbonic acid spring opened during boring operations, and which is eight inches wide and some thirty or forty feet high, is being used in the impregnation of mineral waters.

The color of certain shrimps and crabs, and also the color of their eggs, are known to vary greatly with the surroundings. Those living in green sponges are much larger, lay vastly more eggs, which are also a little larger, and the shrimps are green or yellow, and the large claws are always orange-red, while those of the brown sponges are red, blue or brown.

Meaning of Words.

Speaking of the strange, eventful history of words, the Hartford Courant notes that "queen" originally meant simply woman, but now designates the most glittering place which the earth can bestow, while with the slightly different spelling of "queen" it stands for a woman of a different sort; so, too, "knave" at the start meant only a boy, as in the German form, "knabe" but, as boys go wrong sometimes, the word in time obtained an unpleasant meaning. The word "imp" might have been added as having had very much the same history as "knave" for, meaning first a scion or shoot it next stood for a child, and now it means an inferior devil. Lord Bacon spoke of "those most virtuous and goodly young imps, the Duke of Suffolk and his brother."

Durability of Pencil Marks.

The old-fashioned indiarubber is not of much use nowadays, for it will not rub lead-pencil marks out. The material that enters into pencils is greatly improved, and now the marks made are almost as indelible as ink. Somebody tells the following story in the Washington Post. "I remember that when in Vicksburg once a steamboat explosion occurred about 100 miles up the river. The vessel was called the Morning Star and was shattered, and several people were drowned." In a day or two afterward some of her drift came down; cotton bales, cabin chairs, doors, blinds, etc. Among the debris were a good many papers from the clerk's office. Strange as it may seem the action of the water had almost obliterated the writing in ink, while that traced by lead pencil was as plain as when put on the paper."

If They Had Only Known.

They are trying a man in Norfolk county, Massachusetts, on the charge of being an habitual criminal. He has already been sentenced to several terms of four years in the State prison. If he should get the twenty-five-years sentence of the habitual criminal, his years of imprisonment will aggregate about sixty. It would have been easier and less expensive to have sentenced that man for life in the first place.

1892 **Fall and Winter.** 1893

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