

rudiments of French and Latin, and you have all that ought to be required of a boy of twelve. (1).

From the known to the unknown, from the simple to the complex, from familiar facts to easy generalization—synthesis first and analysis afterwards,—this is the only sure path in all sciences, and therefore in scientific education. In teaching English, you have certain materials to work upon. A child can talk, even if his vocabulary be confined to the two hundred words of the Dorsetshire labourer. He can form sentences simple and compound and “knows the difference ’twixt I and me.”

The first lessons in English Literature are learnt from our nurse or at our mother’s knee. If I had any voice in choosing a nurse for my children, I should lay the greatest stress on her power of story-telling. All who have read Scott’s life (and most of us have renewed our acquaintance with that most delightful of biographies in Mr. Hutton’s admirable abridgment) will remember the part his nurse played in determining the bent of his genius. In the nursery and in the kindergarten (that blessed invention of Fröbel for prolonging the heaven that is about us in our infancy) we follow the method of nature. With school-teaching the unnatural method begins. From the old familiar faces of Jack the Giant-killer, and the Ugly Duckling, the child is banished to a *terra incognita*,—a barbarous land, full of gorgons and hydras and chimeras dire, of imparisyllabic nouns and *verba irregularia*, of enthetic attributes and prolative infinitives. Listen to the pathetic wail of a child:—

“But, madame, the irregular verbs, *verba irregularia*, they distinguish themselves from the regular verbs, *verbus regularibus*, in this,—they are accompanied in the learning with a greater number of floggings, for they are horribly hard. In the gloomy cloisters of the Franciscan Convent close to the school-room, there used to hang a crucifix of green wood, and on it a desolate figure, which even now haunts me in my dreams, and looks down on me with fixed bleeding eyes. Before this figure I used to stand and pray, ‘O thou poor once persecuted God, do help me, if possible, to keep the irregular verbs in my head.’”

The child is no other than Heine, *das Weltkind*, who with all his worldliness preserved, in spite of Latin grammar and *verba irregularia*, of buffets at school and worse buffetings out of school, something of the innocent brightness of a new-born day,—the most brilliant *littérateur* of the century, who, like Scott, like Byron, like Sir H. Davy, like Lamartine, fed his genius from self-provided stores, and owed little or nothing to “that asinine feast of sow-thistles and brambles which is (still as in Milton’s day) commonly set before our youth as all the food and entertainment of their tenderest and most docible age.”

“But, my good Sir,” some modern Orbilius will exclaim, “you surely mean, sooner or later, to wean the child. You can’t intend to nourish a youth sublime on fairy-tales *minus* the science.” Certainly not, but I would have no violent break. Instead of crushing his imagination, I would develop it; and, by its help, wake and stimulate his other powers. To Jack the Giant-killer should succeed Robinson Crusoe (the only book which Jean-Jacques allows in a boy’s library); to Robinson Crusoe Pilgrim’s Progress or the Vicar of Wakefield; then Kingsley’s Greek Heroes, or Lamb’s Tales from Shakespeare; then Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner or Selections from Plutarch’s Lives, and so on.

And when the time came for the child to learn a foreign language—not before ten at the earliest, if I had my way—I would tinge the absinth cup of grammar with the honey of romance and anecdote. For the dry military despatches of Cæsar, or the dreary marches and counter-marches of the Anabasis (I am speaking from a child’s point of view), I would substitute such books as Bennett’s Easy Latin Stories or Phillpott’s Stories from Herodotus. Language, I freely admit, is a study well worth pursuing for its own sake, but there is no reason why at any stage of the process we should divorce the instrument of thought from the thought itself,—not see the wood for the trees, and *propter verba verborum perdere causas*. Ancient literature is like a casket of rare coins kept under lock and key, and we schoolmasters too often waste the best years of school life in teaching the elements of the locksmith’s trade. Most boys, when they leave school, are still fumbling at the wards; few attain even to a sight of the coins, and fewer still can read their image and superscription. Of the riches that lie at their feet, “the heaps of living gold that daily grow,” they have been told nothing, and value it no more than the children of Eldorado in the story value the golden nuggets in the streets. “Classics were the *rêveillé* of the 16th century, they are like to prove the nightmare of the 19th.”<sup>1</sup>

But here I can imagine some modern Demetrius haranguing his workmen of like occupation and saying:—This fellow is introducing a pestilent heresy. Not only does he speak lightly of the great Mumbo Jumbo of Classics, whom all England and every public school worshippeth, but our craft is in danger to be set at nought. If the Vicar of Wakefield and Robinson Crusoe are to form a boy’s principal study, the schoolmaster’s occupation is gone. *Amo* we know, and *tupto* we know, but what are these?

A transitional time must bear hardly on the professional class. It calls for rare moral as well as mental qualities for a man who, half his life, has taught that the sun goes round the earth, to begin to teach that the earth goes round the sun. A fellow feeling, and a sense of my own infirmities, make me sympathize with the worthy guild of idol-makers. I too had to burn the gods I was taught to adore exclusively. Yet our case is not so desperate as our friend would make it out, and I hope there is no occasion for us to commit the happy despatch. Even with such a simple book as Goldsmith’s Vicar of Wakefield there is plenty of teaching to be done. True, it cannot be purely mechanical teaching, as a lesson in Cæsar or Xenophon too often is. The master must have prepared his lesson, and must have his wits about him. I undertake to say that any one who gives the experiment a fair trial will find that his great difficulty is, not to find enough to do, but to get through the lesson of half-a-dozen pages in the hour. But this topic has been so exhaustively handled in an excellent lecture of Dr. Abbott, † that I need not go over the ground again. I will only add one or two hints that I have picked up in the course of teaching:—1. At the end of each lesson give the class a clear outline of what you expect them to prepare for the next lesson. 2. In teaching grammar, drop accident, but emphasize logic. The following question was put the other day to a fourth form:—“If you eat too much pudding at dinner, and are sick, what is the cause, and what the consequence?” Out of thirty, two gave a correct answer. The first thing a

1. E. E. B.’s Table-Talk, unedited

† Lectures on Education, delivered before the College of Preceptors, pp. 41, 42.

(1) The Head Masters’ Conference of 1876 was almost unanimous in condemning the early introduction of Science.