

THE HOME EDUCATION OF THE RURAL DISTRICTS.

While the great question of Agricultural Schools is continually urged upon our legislatures, and, as yet, continually put off with fair words, let us see if there is not room for great improvement in another way—for the accomplishment of which the farming community need ask no assistance.

Our thoughts are turned to the subject of *home education*. It is, perhaps, the peculiar misfortune of the United States, that the idea of education is always affixed to something *away from home*. The boarding-school, the academy, the college—it is there alone we suppose it possible to educate the young man or the young woman. *Home* is only a place to eat, drink, and sleep. The parents, for the most part, gladly shuffle off the whole duties and responsibilities of training the heart, and the social nature of their children—believing that if the intellect is properly developed in the schools, the whole man is educated. Hence the miserably one-sided and incomplete character of so many even of our most able and talented men—their heads have been educated, but their social nature almost utterly neglected. Awkward manners and a rude address, are not the only evidences that many a clever lawyer, professional man, or merchant, offers to us continually, that his education has been wholly picked up away from home, or that home was never raised to a level calculated to give instruction. A want of taste for all the more genial and kindly topics of conversation, and a want of relish for refined and innocent social pleasures, mark such a man as an ill-balanced or one-sided man in his inner growth and culture. Such a man is often successful at the bar or in trade, but he is uneasy and out of his element in the social circle, because he misunderstands it and despises it. His only idea of society is display, and he loses more than three-fourths of the delights of life by never having been educated to use his best social qualities—the qualities which teach a man how to love his neighbour as himself, and to throw the sunshine of a cultivated understanding and heart upon the little trifling events and enjoyments of every day life.

If this is true of what may be called the wealthier classes of the community, it is, we are sorry to say, still more true of the agricultural class. The agricultural class is continually complimented by the press and public debaters,—nay, it even compliments itself, with being the “bone and sinew of the country”—the “substantial yeomanry”—the followers of the most natural and “noblest occupation,” &c. &c. But the truth is, that in a country like this, knowledge is not only power; it is also influence and position; and the farmers, as a class, are the least educated, and therefore the least powerful, the least influential, the least respected class in the community.

The state of things is all wrong, and we deplore it—but the way to mend it is not by feeding farmers with compliments, but with plain truths. As a natural consequence of belonging to the least powerful and least influential class, the sons and daughters of farmers—we mean the *smartest* sons and daughters—those who might raise up

and elevate the condition of the whole class, if they would recognize the dignity and value of their calling, and put their talents into it—are no sooner able to look around and choose for themselves, than they bid good bye to farming. It is too *slow* for the boys, and not *genteel* enough for the girls.

All the education of the schools they go to, has nothing to do with making a farmer of a talented boy, or a farmer's wife of a bright and clever girl—but a great deal to do with unmaking them, by pointing out the superior advantages of merchandise, and the “honourable” professions. At home, it is the same thing. The farmer's son and daughter find less of the agreeable, and attractive, and more of the hard and sordid at their fire side, than in the houses of any other class of equal means. This helps to decide, them to leave “dull care” to dull spirits, and choose some field of life which has more attractions, as well as more risks, than their own.

We have stated all this frankly, because we believe it to be a false and bad state of things which cannot last. The farming class of America is not a rich class—but neither is it a poor one—while it is an independent class. It may and should wield the largest influence in the state, and it might and should enjoy the most happiness—the happiness belonging to intelligent minds, peaceful homes, a natural and independent position, and high social and moral virtues. We have said much, already, of the special schools which the farmer should have to teach him agriculture as a practical art, so that he might make it compare in profit, and in the daily application of knowledge which it demands, with any other pursuit. But we have said little or nothing of the farmer's *home education* and social influences—though these perhaps lie at the very root of the whole matter.

We are not ignorant of the powerful influence of *woman*, in any question touching the improvement of our social and home education. In fact it is she who holds all the power in this sphere; it is she, who really but silently, directs, controls, leads and governs the whole social machine—whether among farmers or others, in this country. To the women of the rural districts—the more intelligent and sensible of the farmer's wives and daughters, we appeal then, for a better understanding and a more correct appreciation of their true position. If they will but study to raise the character of the farmer's social life, the whole matter is accomplished. But this must be done truthfully and earnestly, and with a profound faith in the true nobility and dignity of the farmer's calling. It must not be done by taking for social growth the finery and gloss of mercenary customs and observances. It is an improvement that can never come from the atmosphere of boarding schools and colleges as they are now constituted, for boarding schools and colleges pity the farmer's ignorance, and despise him for it: It must, on the contrary, come from an intelligent conviction of the honesty and dignity of rural life; a conviction that as agriculture embraces the sphere of God's most natural and beautiful operations, it is the best calculated, when rightly