

The Negative in Education.

BY PROFESSOR A. C. MITCHELL, PH. D.

The major part of education is to unlearn. Nursery opinions are like our first teeth, which, sufficing for a time, must ere long drop out or be pulled out—often a painful process—in order that permanent molars may take their place. The child mind is like the chick in the egg, and education is the picking of the shell, breaking through the crust of tradition and opinion and looking out upon things with one's own fresh eyes in an interpretative and constructive way. It is often a hard struggle to get free from the confining shell, and still more often is it difficult to relate one's self aright to the strange, great world into which one is startlingly ushered. Yet, however severe may be the wrench to the mind in thus breaking through encrusted beliefs and conceptions, it is an operation necessary to further growth and to final mastery over the world's forces. Every man has to rebuild his mental home; the booths which custom prepared for his infant thought do not satisfy his unfolding spirit. Education begins in this discontent with nursery notions. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child; now, that I am become a man, I have put away childish things." Many object to putting away childish things, just as the girl, in packing up finally her dolls, feels a pang of regret, though her attachment to these playthings was only prophetic of the responsibilities of motherhood, to which her divine capacities call her. As life forces the soul to abandon the innocence of childhood in order that by struggle it may attain the virtue of manhood, an infinitely higher prize, so instinct impels the mind to leave the security of tradition in order to seek its own fortune in the alluring realms of thought. Thus education is a reaction of the mind upon the world without, a vital apprehension and a personal appropriation of truth. It has less to do with the intellect than with personality.

THE RATIONALIZED ALONE IS THE REAL.

I trust no one will suppose that what we unlearn is necessarily untrue. That is by no means the case. Most of the conceptions which we inherit from parents and from the common stock of human knowledge, are to be sure, true. But our realization of these inherited truths is inadequate, ill-digested, and unreasoned. We must replace unreasoned truth with reasoned truth. Crude opinions, accepted upon authority, must give place to personal conviction. Hegel's postulate was that the rational is the real. I should say: The rationalized alone is the real. For we know in fact only what we have in some sense experienced, just as the blind man may listen to discourses on the laws of light and yet know actually nothing of the beauty of the rainbow, or just as the deaf man may acquaint himself with the laws of sound and yet never have his heart thrilled with the sweetness of his mother's voice. To him who delights in color and harmony, those mathematical laws of light and sound are not less, but more, expressive and appreciable. Truth, therefore, does not become dynamic until it is wrought into character and takes hold of the will. The mind finds it necessary to the vital process to chew the cud.

"PHILOSOPHY IS THE ART OF DOUBTING WELL."

Descartes is rightly esteemed the founder of modern philosophy, since he first laid bare consciousness as the granite foundation upon which the whole subsequent structure has been built. We have his own account of the mental crisis which led to the epoch-making discovery—a passage as celebrated as any in French literature. "After I had spent some years in studying the book of the world (in contrast to the books of the learned), and thus striving to gain some experience, I determined one day to study also within myself, and to employ all my mental force in choosing the paths which I ought to follow—in which I succeeded, I think far better than if I had never left my country or my books. I was then in Germany, on account of the wars, and as I was returning from the coronation of the Emperor [Ferdinand I., Sept. 9, 1619] to the army, the commencement of the winter stopped me in a quarter where, finding no conversation to entertain me, and, fortunately, having neither cares nor passions to trouble me, I remained all day alone shut up in a warm room, where I was at perfect leisure to occupy myself with my own thoughts." He began by casting overboard all things that seemed doubtful—the impressions of the senses, the conclusions of science and philosophy, and even the evidence of the existence of matter, until at last he came to consciousness itself. *Cogito, ergo sum*—not a syllogism, but an inevitable and immediate inference from the very act of thinking—became the starting point for him individually and for mankind since to reconstruct philosophic thought, which had sunk out of sight in the ancient quagmire of Neo-Platonism. Descartes had not reached his twenty-fourth year when he thus threw up the dogmas taught him by the Jesuits at Le Fleche, and forced his way through a negotiation of errors and prejudices to the affirmation of that first irrefragable position, upon which all science was to be grounded. He was the Columbus of the new world of thought, whom chimeras did not daunt nor prejudices impede.

So drastic a process as this does not fall to the lot of every man. Descartes' spirit travelled for the ages. But every being who attains intellectual manhood must pass through an experience not unlike that of this parent thinker. Is it not, therefore, the duty of father and mother and teacher to ease this crucial process in the child's mental growth by accustoming it to examine evidence, to weigh conclusions, to return frequently to first principles? We can in this way not only avoid skepticism, but also vitalize the faith of the inquiring mind.

A WISE QUESTIONING IS HALF OF KNOWLEDGE.

This great truth is so admirably stated by Coleridge that I am tempted to reproduce his remarkable words: "Where there is a great deal of smoke and no clear flame, it argues much moisture in the matter, yet it witnesseth certainly that there is fire there; and, therefore, dubious questioning is a much better evidence than that senseless deadness which most people take for believing. Men that know nothing in science have no doubts. He never truly believed who was not made first sensible and convinced of unbelief. Never be afraid to doubt, if only you have the disposition to believe, and doubt in order that you may end in believing the truth. He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all." These conceptions only echo an earlier thinker who taught that a life without cross-examination is no life at all.

THE PRESENT AGE PROFICIENT IN UNLEARNING.

This age has found it necessary to unlearn much. Hence unrest, so characteristic of mind in a state of ferment, has made itself felt in all spheres of activity. The soldier has stripped himself of the medieval armor; the statesman has laid aside his powdered wig (except the figure-head Speaker in Parliament); Chinese walls have been taken to the ground, freedom of intercourse and freedom of trade—alas! not in America—being encouraged; medicine has abandoned bleeding as a cure-all; governments have found that the rack and stake cannot extinguish thought; the church has recovered from the delusion that science is its foe; men have become so assured of the truth that they are willing to submit it, if need be, to criticism and analysis, believing that "truth, like the light, is self-evidencing." We have, indeed, made great progress in unlearning. The world has made up its mind that "it is better not to know so much than to know so much that is not true."

What, we may inquire, will be the probable outcome of this age of analysis? Is it simply the work of clearing the tangled thicket that in its stead a garden may grow? Is destructive criticism only the preliminary stage of constructive thought? Is the Bible, as well as gold, tested by fire? Is it, in fact, necessary to put new wine into new wine-skins? Does each age have to interpret the world in its own terms, just as each period in literature has demanded a fresh translation of Homer? Are the facts of nature less true, if they are construed as vital rather than mechanical? Is religion less authoritative, if it is enthroned in conscience rather than in the Vatican? Is it really true, after all, that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath? Is it truth or tradition that makes men free? Is truth something written on a "bit of rag paper," or something engraved on the heart of man? Is it better for a creed or church or Pope to be a law unto man than for him to become a law unto himself? Does not the needle of conscience, quiver and vibrate though it may, by reason of the disturbance caused by the iron of our carnal nature, point at last to the Divine Centre of our existence?

"Mother Age (for misse I knew not),—help me as when life began:
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the sun.
O, I see the crecent promise of my spirit hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy yet."
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Our Foreign Mission Work.

In the "Review of Reviews" the "American Monthly" for Jan. 1901, Edward F. Merriam furnishes an article on "Foreign Missions of the Twentieth Century" which is suggestive. The Baptists of the Maritime Convention may do well to consider.

This writer claims that the lessons taught by the work of the nineteenth century in missionary pagan lands is

1. "That the evangelization of every nation must be done chiefly by its own people." That trained converts in the past have been the "effective instruments in all the great Christian ingatherings in heathen lands."

2. "That necessity of self-support and self-reliance in the native churches has been acknowledged in the closing years of the nineteenth century."

This writer adds that "only by insisting on these features in missionary work can Christianity be permanently established in any nation on an independent basis."

It may be that those who have been most careful students of our own missionary records will quite agree with this writer as to the teachings of the nineteenth century on this subject. We may also agree with this

writer that "as a result of these lessons from the missionary experiences of the past century, certain modifications of missionary methods in the twentieth will occur."

1. "More responsibility will be thrown upon native Christians and native churches in missionary lands." With the advance of educational facilities in mission lands native Christians may be better fitted for leadership than the missionaries under whose direction they have labored.

2. "Christian missions will increasingly take the form of sympathy and aid to the native churches in foreign lands." Native laborers will need prolonged and thorough training which will call for large pecuniary investments for the support of medical missions, Christian literature and higher education.

3. Missionaries will be more and more selected for educational and administrative rather than preaching abilities." This writer says, "every conspicuous success in missions has been associated with some leader of eminent administrative qualities."

4. "There will be a proportionate decrease in the number of missionaries sent out from Christian lands in comparison with the amount of work carried on."

In support of this proposition this writer says: "The number of missionaries may not be less for some years; but the assignment of their spheres of labor should be gradually readjusted in accordance with twentieth century methods of mission work, and ultimately the number of foreign missionaries will be reduced without injury to the advance of Christianity. This would effect not only more rational methods, but a large economy, as the support of one missionary, if saved, would employ a dozen native workers, each of whom might be as effective in evangelistic work as a missionary from other lands."

While these views by many may be regarded as somewhat optimistic, yet they may open a way to a solution of our own missionary problems, which are more and more perplexing as we advance in our mission work among the peoples of India. Neither at the meetings of the W. M. U. at St. John, or at our Convention in Mouton, were there any outlines of a future policy proposed that will command the best judgment of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces.

The plan proposed some time since by our missionaries in India, and endorsed by our Board to send a larger number of mission families to the Telugus, has not been responded to by our people. Evidently our people have not been captured by this plan.

By our missionaries this is interpreted as indicating a want of true piety and loyalty to the Kingdom of Christ in our churches. We listen to strong expressions of reproof at our platform meetings by some of our returned missionaries, and this too has a large place in the addresses of some missionary agents in our churches. All this is most surely not in the interest of the cause of missions—this indicates a want of harmony among the workers which is regrettable and painful—it also indicates the absence of wise leadership. That our church members have arisen to a consciousness of their ability for, and privileges in missionary work, no intelligent pastor believes, but those who know our people best will only expect to win them to any religious enterprise by capturing their convictions in its favor.

To our dear brethren on our mission fields the whole outlook of the business is quite unlike that of our churches at home. Quiet consideration and wise counsel are necessary under these circumstances in order to harmonious effort.

A careful husbanding and developing of our resources at home and abroad—the clear outlining of a workable plan which will encompass the end sought, though it take long years to reach it—is the demand of the hour with the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces in their Foreign Mission work.

J. H. SAUNDERS.
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A Strange Coincidence.

BY M. B. SHAW.

Some readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR may not have heard that in this age of marvellous activity among book makers a certain Dr. Cheyne, who claims supremacy among that school of men known as "Higher Critics," has taken in hand to originate and publish an "Encyclopedia Biblica."

In this publication the author of the article on Ecclesiastes stated the findings of Higher Criticism concerning the book of Ecclesiastes. The time of its writing had been fixed somewhere between 100 and 200 before Christ. This conclusion was reached by "internal evidence," by "historical allusions" found in the book, by the "philology" of the author and by supposed references to Greek philosophy.

Every consideration of the latest scientific scholarship caused these men to come to the irrevocable conclusion that Ecclesiastes was a very late book, and could not have been written by Solomon.

Now for the strange coincidence. A few weeks after this article appeared an ancient Hebrew text was unearthed among some rubbish in Cairo, Egypt.

The author of this text was Ben Sir, a Jew, who lived and wrote 300 years before Christ. In this text he quotes freely from the book of Ecclesiastes and word for word. In a later publication of the "Encyclopedia Biblica" the author of the former article on Ecclesiastes confesses that he and his confederates have been mistaken, and that the latest scientific scholarship was at fault in this instance, and that after all Solomon may have written Ecclesiastes.

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