

### A FEW THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION.

THE relative advantage of a literary and scientific education, has been vigorously discussed of late years, and the contest is by no means ended yet. Gradually, those who favor the introduction of more science teaching in our course of instruction, have been pushing their way. until now at last such studies take up a large part of the school hours.

Those who desire to have the older, more literary methods of education retained, have not however been silenced, and there are even indications of a strong reaction setting in in their favor. Not indeed because an acquaintance with the natural sciences is of little value in itself; but, that too much has been expected from them. It is not the purpose of this paper to disparage their usefulness in their proper place, but to make some remarks about the subject of education in general.

Our ideas of the purpose and aims of education are apt to be very vague. We are too often inclined to think that its object is merely to fill our minds with facts, and the more we can cram in and hold there, the better educated we are. We forget that it is possible to be a very learned man and still be poorly educated; yet learning and education are by no means synonymous terms. We may in fact have our minds stored with knowledge, be indeed veritable walking encyclopedias, and still be unable to make use of this raw material which we have on hand. What the mind needs in addition, is the development and training of its faculties and powers. This can only be done by exercise. Just as we take bodily exercise to call into play the various muscles of the body, so in the case of the mind. Its different faculties need exercise to strengthen them. The mind is not merely the store-house of the memory in which simply hoard up facts as we get them; it is rather a workshop filled with increasingly complicated and intricate machinery by which this raw material gathered by the senses is taken up and manufactured and elaborated into various products. This process we call reasoning. The senses are thus not the only means we have of acquiring knowledge. Our reason and judgment must be considered of even greater importance; and these are the qualities which belong peculiarly to man among living animals and mark him as a being of higher and nobler life.

What then should be the object of education? Obviously to develop and train these reasoning powers as the noblest with which man is gifted; to enable a man to think clearly; to reason correctly and arrive at just conclusions upon all matters that come up before him in life. To do this of course, he must have knowledge, knowledge both of himself and of the world

around him. But this it must be remembered, is not the whole of education; it is merely the raw material, or, to vary the metaphor, the foundation. Our reason and judgment must rear the superstructure.

The question next arises, what studies are best adapted for this purpose? It has been objected to the natural sciences, that they appeal chiefly to our observing faculties at least in their elementary stages with which our schools are mostly concerned, and do not sufficiently exercise our reflective, reasoning powers.

As an example of this, it was lately remarked at a German university, which draws its students from both scientific and literary, or classical schools, that the classical students not only kept ahead in their own subjects, but that they were so far in advance of the science men in mental development and capacity for acquiring knowledge, their training and discipline were so superior, that before the end of their college course, they had actually outstripped their competitors even in the science course.

So much has been written for and against classical studies, that little more can now be said either new or interesting. I wish however, to say a few words in their favor, even if they are not original. Few seem to understand their purpose or value. Practically, they are of little benefit to the ordinary business man, at least directly. They cannot be turned into ready money; but to those who have a higher aim in life than mere money making, they can become of inestimable advantage in cultivating, enlarging, and refining the mind. Learning a new language is not merely substituting one English word or phrase in place of a word or phrase in the original. To render the sense of a classical author into good clear English, we must enter into the very spirit of the writer, think his thoughts and feel his emotions. To understand him at all, we must of necessity understand him thoroughly. To do this, requires close application and severe study. It calls forth and exercises the mental faculties in a way few other studies do. In English we can and do often read an author without having a clear perception of what he wishes to say. The language gives us little difficulty, we know the meaning of words at least in their general acceptation and we are apt to fall into a careless and negligent habit of skimming over a work without any clear idea of its contents. All this is just the reverse in the classical languages. There the newness of the languages, the exactness of expression, owing to the inflected nature of the words, arrests attention at once and compels thought. For these reasons, the Greek and Latin languages have always been considered to have a high educative value and, though at the present time there may be a strong opposition manifested towards them, it will likely be a long time before we shall find anything to replace them. A.