

For the JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.]

AMERICAN CHILDREN.

English people generally are surprised at the mode of training American parents adopt in regard to children. We all know that in England the parents as a rule are far more strict than the parents on this side of the Atlantic. The children are not allowed to follow their own ideas of right and wrong. It may be safely said without fear of contradiction that the English children are very much more respectful to those in authority and to their elders than American children. I do not propose to uphold for one moment the "mock respectfulness" which is given to those persons who have no claim to respect whatever, outside of their wealth or inherited position. Let us hope that this is dying out, and that in the near future it will be reckoned among the things of the past. If we look back a half century over the political reforms of England the conclusion is forced upon us that many of the old customs are dying out and giving place to those of a more practical nature. Why do the gentry of England send their children to the great public schools of England? The answer is easy. The strict discipline demanded at these institutions makes the youth understand that the world was not made for him. "Earth my footstool, my canopy the skies." If these same children remained with their parents they would grow up and act as they pleased either because they would not or could not take the necessary time and patience to train the youthful mind. Hence they prefer delegating this to the schoolmaster. In America the parents as a rule are not wealthy enough to send their children away from home to be educated. Consequently the training of the youth of this country is almost entirely in the parent's hands. In many, many cases I fear they are guilty of the sin of omission. It is not a very uncommon thing to hear children give impertinent answers to their parents; many a time it turns into a battle of words between parent and child. When a boy or girl who has such training at home goes to school every person is aware of what the effect would be. The impertinence is hurled at the teacher with increased power until the punishment so well deserved is meted out. In the playground, in going from and returning to school, the other children come in contact with this unruly boy or girl and in time they will fall into this degrading habit. If parents could only believe that in school many boys are not the meek and quiet youths of the home circle the teacher's trials would be lessened. Often we hear a mother say, "I would like to catch a teacher flogging my boy." "A mother's love," you say. I say, "A mother's curse." If any child does a wrong is he not to be punished? Yet perhaps the same mother, if a starving man broke into her house merely to obtain some food, or happened to take some without breaking in the house, would call upon the law to punish such an one. Worse still, many a mother plays the hypocrite and conceals as many of her child's evil deeds as possible from the father. A mother's love? When in future years this youth, a man, is called upon to pay the penalty for some crime committed on account of defective training in childhood, you will still cry, "A mother's love." Many a parent can remember a well deserved flogging at the hands of a teacher. Suppose the Board of Education should say, "No corporal punishment is allowed in any school," what would be the effect? The pupil knows that you dare not touch him, and he does exactly as he pleases. Moral suasion is not the same anodyne as birch suasion. At the former he can laugh, at the latter he dare not. "Spare the rod and spoil the child," is an old proverb.

American children as a rule are given too much latitude. If you visit the skating rink, the theatre, in fact any place of amusement you will find children present who, if they should not be peacefully sleeping, at least should be around the family hearth. I do not wish to convey the idea that children should be deprived of amusement. In fact one evil of home life is, that there is a dearth of amusement in the family circle. The outside

sports can be indulged in at the proper time. In short let the little folks have an abundance of amusement and they will grow up better men and women. Let them even dance. Although a great deal is said against dancing, all I have to remark is this: If a young lady or gentleman must refrain from dancing to keep themselves "spotless from the world," the only effectual way would be to shut themselves up in monasteries far from the haunts of men. Trials only show the stuff we are made of. Difficulties make a man.

"The fire seven times tried this;
Seven times tried that judgment is,
That did never choose amiss."

Again, one has only to take a stroll through the streets of St. John and Portland, to visit the various railway stations and such places to find children of all ages late in the evening wandering about. Do children learn to swear at home? Do they learn to drink intoxicating liquors in the family circle? Do they have instilled into their minds from the lips of a parent evil thoughts?

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A PROPOSED REFORM.

BY JOHN BRITAIN.

The Board of Education has come to the conclusion that one year is not too long a time for pupil-teachers to devote to special preparation for their work. No argument is now needed to prove the wisdom of this decision; but another reform is still more urgently demanded.

The function of the Normal school is, I take it, two-fold: primarily, to give a thorough professional training; secondarily, to instruct the pupil-teachers in those subjects which should be included in our public school course, but which are not now effectively taught, owing to defects in the education of our present teachers. Hence, every candidate for admission to the Normal school should be required to pass a *thorough* examination in all those branches of knowledge, required for the class of license for which he applies, that can be taught in the public schools.

This regulation would not only afford a stimulus to teachers to do more effective work, but would reach the people and give all those (a very large number) who have children, relatives, or friends, preparing for the Normal school, a stronger personal interest in the maintenance of good schools, and a greater willingness to contribute adequately to their support. The retention of the advanced pupils in the schools for a year or two longer would have a beneficial effect upon the others; and a greater number would receive the benefits of a good English education. The facilities offered by the Grammar and Superior schools, also, would be more largely taken advantage of by those working for the higher grades of license.

After passing this initiatory examination, the candidate might, if he desire it, be granted a temporary license for one year, of the class for which he worked, a reduced provincial allowance to be paid him when he had successfully completed one-half or the whole of the required course at the Normal school. This would be much better than granting local licenses to comparatively illiterate persons, and would materially aid worthy young people of small means in securing the necessary training. In case, however, the supply of teachers should equal the demand, these temporary licenses could be withheld.

If this regulation were adopted, the Normal school could attend solely to its proper work. Surely one year is not too great a time for the acquisition of a competent knowledge of the powers and capabilities of the human mind; of the scope, aims, and methods of public education; and for the practice necessary to make this knowledge effectively available in the school-room.

But, besides this, there are several subjects which figure in the prescribed curriculum which, at present, serve for no other purpose than to excite the wrathful attacks of ignorant and narrow-minded niggards, and the praises of liberal and philanthropic foreign-

ers. But a small proportion of our teachers, for instance, even of those of the higher grades, are capable of teaching vocal music successfully, or of giving effective instruction in hygiene, sanitary and agricultural chemistry, and local natural history—subjects which would contribute quite as much as any others in the curriculum to promote the moral and physical well-being of the rising generation, and to make them contented and happy in their homes and country. Hitherto this state of things has been unavoidable; the adoption of proposed reform would, with the aid of the Normal school, gradually supply this defect in our system.

CONCERNING NOISE.

There must be a reasonable quietness in the school-room. But how shall it be had where there are forty children with eighty feet, and sometimes eighty children with one hundred and sixty feet? Books and slates will drop, pencils will grate, and sometimes lips will whisper. Noise is a pleasure to the pupil, too; he enjoys the hum and buzz that the teacher dislikes. How shall we secure quietness?

Mr. Sharp will say: "No trouble about it, sir; give me a good strap and I'll make it quiet. There is no noise in my school." Very likely; but that is not the kind of quietness that is wanted; it is too much like the improvement in the colored people's religion that resulted from the earthquake in Charleston. That kind of quietness is wanted that the young pupil produces by his own efforts—self-made quietness, or "subjective quietness," as the philosopher would say. To produce that the teacher will "lay awake nights and study of days."

The following has come to us from a successful teacher, who writes not for the purpose of display, but to help others who have not had the experience he has had.

"I once found myself in a school-room that gave me a great deal of trouble, and will tell you how it became perfection, for such it really did. There were sixty boys out of a live village in it; they formed the lowest grades of the advanced or grammar school. There were some 'hard customers'—sons of the butchers, the canal men, and tanners. I assured them, over and over, that they were there not merely to study and recite lessons, but to grow better and nobler in every way. I put on a long strip of paper the words, 'We come here to grow stronger, nobler, and better.' I put this up before them on the wall over my desk. This matter I discussed very frequently during the first days and weeks.

"Now during the first week there had been noise, and a great deal of it; but I found much of it came from carelessness. I trained the boys to go out and come in with care; opening and shutting the door and the desks was practised over and over; coming to the recitation seat was also practised over and over; getting out the books, and putting them away, was a matter to which much time was given. When the second week began, more than half the work had been accomplished.

"It may seem to many that the training might have been carried on just as well without addressing the moral side of the pupil, but that is a great mistake. The teacher must in some way give moral stamina. To say, 'don't do this, and don't do that,' will injure a pupil if kept up too long. He must begin to act from principles that lie within him, from the desire to do the noble thing.

"To keep the feet from being shoved backward and forward on a sandy floor, was a problem. I told the boys that it injured our school, and proposed to appoint a boy to attend to it and report who made no noise to speak of, and to admonish