

## Education.

## MORAL AND LITERARY TRAINING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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*(Continued from No. 1.)*

Another mistake consists in giving too much time to mere *imitative* reading, and not enough to ascertaining the meaning of the words and sentences. Children should be impressed with the fact that the principal object of reading is to obtain the thoughts of others; and they should early accustom themselves to ascertain the meaning of what they read, that no word may be passed without being understood. Let me say that the dictionary should be the constant companion of the pupils of our Grammar and High Schools. Would you neglect the elocutionary side of the subject? I am asked. By no means. No one places a higher value on elocution, than I do; but I insist that it is the duty of the teacher to see that the passage is understood by the pupils before the attempt is made to drill them in elocution.

Another mistake is to be found in the fact that the almost universal tendency in this country of late years has been to crowd too much into the High School course; to make the High School a substitute for the College and University must result in failure.

*Genus of Literature.*—Morality, it under this head, may be placed honesty, patriotism, and good-will to men, ought to come within the scope of school work; for morality in this sense is the dearest element of the good citizen, and the good citizen is the prime object of education. Our country has less lack of intelligence than of public honesty and private fair dealing, less lack of knowledge than of inclination towards a noble life; which facts show that something in the present order of society is either fundamentally wrong or deplorably weak. But where shall we seek a remedy? When and how begin to mend? The subject of moral progress does not belong solely to the religious world. It is a matter of that good sense which considers the welfare of the immediate present, and looks with a benevolent eye to an improved manhood in the future. For morality is almost as beautiful when viewed as a guiding element to man in this world's transactions as it is *when* viewed as an essential to happiness in the world to come.

We cannot serve the future of this world in a better way than in taking care of the present of the children. We can do this by introducing to our present educational system a factor whose object shall be to give the proper direction to the child's thoughts; "As a man thinketh, so is he." Children should be lead to think properly, that they may be enabled to act justly and generously; and it would be far safer both for them and for the community if their acts were directed by fixed principles rather than by sudden and untrustworthy impulses.

The literature of the world embodies a universal moral creed. In its fulness here and there may be found the holy teachings of the Bible, in language pleasing to the ear of youth, and in form adapted to his understanding. It inculcates all the substantial teachings of the Scriptures without awaking the suspicion that the private realm of devotional form is to be invaded.

A broad-minded selection of noble passages, though it may not be able to do all we could wish in a moral way, can certainly do much to raise men to a high moral, political, and social plane. It may not make men prayerful, but it can make them respectful and respectable. It may not give them the wisdom of statesmen, but it can make them intelligent voters and fervent patriots. It

may not fit them for a future life, but it can do much towards making this one pleasant to themselves and to their fellow-men. It can put a light into their hearts that will illumine many of earth's darkest places.

I believe that gems of literature introduced into our schools, if properly taught, will be able to do these things; partly by their own direct influence on the young mind, but principally as being such a draught on the fountain of higher literature as shall result in an abiding thirst for noble reading. The right kind of reading will induce the right kind of thinking, and proper thinking will insure correct acting.

What harmony the introduction of literature into our schools assures us! Let the public schools be the instrument of forming this common love for the noble and beautiful, and who but will acknowledge they have performed a work of greatest utility to man, and added a thousand fold to their present value as factors in human progress? Heretofore the boy's education has been no broader than his business expectations; his happiness as a man and his worth as a citizen have not been taken into account. The principles are too narrow for an age that is looking for good men as well as for good accountants and grammarians. They are needlessly narrow; they leave, as it were, broad fields of noble soil untilled, and this soil must be tilled to bear fruit. For example, a man cannot be a patriot, except negatively, until he has been led to understand and value patriotism. But on a grand subject, like patriotism, there is an unwillingness or incapacity in most minds to think. Such minds must be enlarged before patriotism can be anything to them but a barren name; but may not patriotic passages, under a wise teacher, promote the necessary growth? For who, even among the educated, has not felt a tinge of shame at the dulness of his own patriotism on reading Grinke's beautiful lines, "We cannot honor our country with too deep a reverence. We cannot love her with an affection too pure and fervent. We cannot serve her with an energy of purpose or a faithfulness of zeal too steadfast and ardent." And what is our country? It is not the East, with her hills and her valleys, with her countless sails, and the rocky ramparts of her shores? It is not the North, with her thousand villages and her harvest-homes, with her frontiers of the lake and the ocean. It is not the West, with her forest-sea and her inland isles, with her luxuriant expanses clothed in verdant corn, with her beautiful Ohio and her majestic Missouri. Nor is it the South, opulent in the mimic snow of her cotton, in the rich plantations of the rustling cane, and in the golden robes of her rice-fields. What are these but the sister-families of one greater and better family—our country?" Or Scott's, beginning,—

"Breathes there a man with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
'This is my own, my native land?'"

What I have said of patriotism applies to all the elements of great mindedness.

The practice, therefore, of memorizing the choice thoughts of our best writers should be made a prominent feature of school work. Oliver Wendell Holmes says, "There is no place which an author's thoughts can nestle in so securely as in the memory of a school boy or school girl." It is also in accord with the advice of Arthur Helps, who says, "We should lay up in our minds a store of good thoughts in well-wrought words, which shall be a living treasure of knowledge always with us, and from which, at various times, and amidst all the shifting of circumstances, we may be sure of drawing some comfort, guidance, and sympathy."

The idea of its introduction is not new in the history of education. In a similar manner the Germans have been long in