

chusetts, and the Michigan University at Ann Arbor, are admirably sustained. The Professors are numerous, and highly cultivated men. At these places the Greek and Latin classics, Hebrew, divinity, chemistry, modern languages, and the higher branches of mathematics, are taught, without, however, reaching the British or Irish University standard. Splendid libraries are attached to these institutions, and some of them possess beautiful museums, laboratories, observatories, and schools of law and medicine, with their accessories. Of late, the importance of military education has entered into the consideration of the Governors of States, and military chairs are gradually being endowed, that the youth may learn fortification, castrametation, surveying, logistics, the manufacture of artillery appliances, and so forth. The West Point Academy, on the river Hudson, has long enjoyed an enviable distinction for the completeness of its system of military instruction; but under the altered circumstances of the country it is found insufficient for the public purposes; and as the wisest men in the States now look upon a standing army of 100,000 men as an inevitable condition of the future existence of the Republic, let the civil war terminate as it may, military colleges, or military grafts upon the existing institutions, will become indispensable to the American youth.

If it be true that the purpose of schools is not so much to impart knowledge as to strengthen the mental faculties, we must allow to the Americans the credit of having devised a very satisfactory system, for nowhere do we find the intellectual property of man in greater activity. But if the true object of education is to make men profound mathematicians and accomplished classical scholars, according to the highest European standards, then our transatlantic cousins can only boast of a superficial training, for they terminate their college life where we generally begin ours. But that termination, which they call "a commencement," because it refers to their entrance upon public life, is honoured as an event in which the Republic at large is concerned. The most spacious theatres—the opera houses, indeed—are engaged on such occasions; for no smaller edifice will hold the thousands of citizens who assemble to listen to the prize orations, cheer the graduates as their diplomas are handed to them, and overwhelm them with showers of bouquets, scattered by the fair hands of the admirers of the patience, the toil, and the talent which have plucked bright honour from the fountain of intelligence.

IV. Paper on Practical Education.

1. ON THE MEANS OF IMPROVING THE MEMORIES OF CHILDREN, AND RENDERING THEIR KNOWLEDGE PERMANENT.

We have no hesitation in transferring to our pages the following extracts from a paper read before an association of teachers by Mr. Flint, who was engaged as Registrar of the late Education Commission. It relates to a subject of growing interest and importance.

"The objects which I have in view, and which I am sure you also have in view in your daily work, are threefold: I wish to improve the memories of children (my own is a very bad one, because it was not properly exercised); to excite their interest; and to render their knowledge permanent.

"I picture to myself that weariness of teaching children to read which you must daily experience; I have known it intimately. A man need have by nature ardent love for teaching, to be successful in bringing the young past the first weariness of learning to read. Well, you turn out your scholars. They are scattered far and wide. Many go to agricultural work; are exposed to all kinds of weather; become familiar

'With the stiff soil that clogs the feet,
Chill rain and harvest heat;'

and you are glad that you have been able at least to teach them to read and write before the stern necessities of their lives snatch them from you. You reason thus: They leave me early, to go their several ways in the world—some to succeed, some to fail, some to find comparative happiness, some nothing but afflictions, struggles, sickness, and disappointments; but you say, Be their lot in life bright or dark, I have bestowed upon them one gift, the power and love of reading, that will go with them wherever they go, and be to them a source of consolation and of delight. But have you? I do not wish to darken the prospect, to throw a pall over it, to say that you are wilfully sanguine as to the perfection of what you have accomplished. I think, however, that in general—there are, I know, many exceptions—what teachers have done disappears rapidly, like the mist breathed upon glass, like those marks which are made on sand by the remorseless sea. The little building set up with so much solicitude and care, and which you view with such great com-

placency, is cruelly washed away by the tide of business and care which surges against its frail walls. All this because the impressions given were not more indelibly made, the walls rendered more permanent. How little even of the power to read without conscious difficulty is retained by the young in a very few years after they have quitted school! And depend upon it, that as soon as reading ceases to be pursued without conscious difficulty, so soon does it cease to be turned to as a resource for spare hours. Thus it is that the clergy so often say, that when the young people who were once taught in the schools are examined for confirmation, they are found to have lost almost all which they learned at school; yes, even the taste for reading.

"The proportion of children who retain through life the power of reading with ease and pleasure is small. Obviously night-schools would help us at this point, but unfortunately we have not a well-organized system of night-schools. Can you not do more, therefore, in day-schools? This is the grand question for you to-day. Here I remark, that those who have lost much which they gained at the day-schools are often keenly conscious of their loss, and surprised by it. Of this fact I once saw in a night-school a somewhat amusing instance. A man who had, when young, attended a day-school, was reading aloud from the Book of Genesis. He came to that passage, the 5th verse of the 32nd chapter, which describes Jacob's going to meet Esau. 'Thirty milch camels' he read as 'thirty Welch cattle,' and the 'ten foals' he turned into 'ten fools.' At another place, the possessive case, with its sign, the apostrophe, puzzled him; and when the teacher said, 'Why, you ought to know that it is only the possessive case,' he looked at his neighbour, and said with an air of awe-struck wonder, 'What cake did he say?' So soon is the power of reading lost.

"Now that the Revised Code requires more attention to reading, and to scholars as individuals, much of that time which used to be spent in lecturing upon numerous subjects may be profitably devoted to that which will improve their memories, make their knowledge permanent, excite their emulation, give them more to do for themselves, and prevent their becoming passive listeners to oral teaching, which often goes in at one ear and out at the other.

"In schools for the richer classes of society, scholars are required to produce a large number of *written* exercises, which, being a tangible result, are a test of progress evident both to teacher and learner. Cannot this plan be systematically—it must be *systematically*—pursued in elementary schools? Might not written exercises and reading be made to go hand in hand, as it were, more than they now do, and to help each other? Might not as much time be profitably devoted to the one as to the other? Might not writing come in and indelibly fix the reading lessons upon the mind, as the prepared plate of the photographer fixes the image which light conveys?

"If this be a correct principle, we have to inquire how it can be systematically applied up through the classes in a school.

"The very little children—the infancy—must obviously see letters formed on the blackboard or on the floor, and simply copy them. In their case the principle cannot be applied. In a grade higher also it cannot, I think, be applied, for when children can form all the letters of the alphabet on their slates, they must for some time simply copy words. But even at this point I would suggest that *short sentences* should be copied by them. What can be more dreary for them than to fill a slate with one word? Their intelligence would be quickened by the writing of something connected.

"I ascend now to a higher grade in the school. Here the scholars will read rather fluently. Well, after they had read a lesson from their reading books, they should sit down and transcribe it, that is, copy it from their books on their slates. This practice would train their eyes to correct forms of words, and thus they would learn spelling, and the subject-matter of the lesson would be impressed upon their minds. Further, whatever they had learned by heart at home or at school should be written out from memory. This should be done daily,—never omitted. Constantly practised, what a habit of reflection it would engender! what strengthening of the memory it would effect! That which they had read or learnt by heart, instead of passing away, would, by this constant habit of retrospection, be reconsidered and made permanent. We never know how much or little we have made our own until we have to write it.

"These same remarks apply when we ascend to a higher grade in the school. Here the scholars not only commit to memory but read chapters out of their class books, and are questioned upon Scriptural and other subjects. Greater demands upon their intelligence might now be made. Composition, or the reproducing in writing, and in their own language, whatever they had read or been orally taught, should be daily practised. 'Sit down and write all you can recollect of such-and-such subject which you have just read or been taught,' should be the teacher's frequent charge. Emulation in producing the best-written abstracts might be excited by a variety