

of life, and to them he devotes the greater portion of his time and attention. The infants are left to the care of a monitor, perhaps not always the best model they could have before them. But little interest is taken by this embryo teacher of his charge. He, of course, from want of experience, is under the impression that he does his duty if he makes the poor little child learn the names of the few arbitrary signs which it sees before it, and manages to keep his charge from making so much noise as would interfere with the other business of the school. Now, all this is wrong. The business of leading the young mind into the mysteries as reading and writing, and of giving to it its first moral tone should not be entrusted to inexperienced hands. It requires the highest order of adaptability for teaching to implant early impressions on the infant. There is something in it more than a mere mechanical routine. If any occupation requires a knowledge of human nature more than another, it is that of infant teaching. It is an occupation which requires unceasing diligence, a calm temper, a quickness at detecting little moral flaws unseen by the careless eye, a winning manner, and above all a nature full of love for the little ones. These are qualities hard to find, but not impossible. We have seen them, and in the infant school too.

The chief aim of the infant school-teacher should be to try and make the school-room a happy place for the children—to cast around it a halo of enjoyment—to make it in fact a little paradise. Except this is done, the education fails at its very outset. Its chief aim cannot be attained. It becomes a place hateful to the little ones. They long to get out of it, and they go to it with a reluctance amounting to dread. They carry home with them no useful moral lesson, but are left to pick up that commodity on the streets.

Perhaps we may as well say here, as further on, that men should never be employed as infant school-teachers. In saying so it is not to be supposed that we belong to the softer sex. We rank amongst the male *genus*, but nevertheless, we are not of those who would wish to monopolise to the lords of creation any occupation which we believe could be as well or better filled by a woman; and this is one peculiarly adapted to a gentle and loving woman. Women have naturally the very qualities which are most desirable in the infant school. We have been in one or two infant-schools which were presided over by a master, and we could observe a certain amount of harshness of manner in the children which was entirely absent in those conducted by mistresses. Decidedly the best schools of the class we have any acquaintance with are those attached to the District Model schools. The teachers are not hampered with too many forms, but are left to their own judgment in almost every detail of their duties, and so much the better. The moment you begin to lay down rules to the infant school-teacher, that moment you make of her a mere machine. She loses her interest in her occupation, and it becomes to her a mere drudgery. The praise we have accorded does not, however, refer to all the model schools, for we are sorry to say that in some few of them the *surveillance* is somewhat too strict. We mention this, hoping it may catch the eye of some inspectors who, with the best intentions, interfere a little too much in the internal working of the infant schools under their charge. We would, above all things, say to an infant school-mistress—do not attempt to make little prodigies of the tender things committed to your charge;—do not try to force the little intellects, some of which may be, and undoubtedly are, unhealthy precocious;—do not yield to those foolish mothers who are anxious that their little one should shine in the eyes of their acquaintance. If you find precocity, restrain it without seeming to do so, but on no account encourage. There are such things as unhealthy brains—there are such things as children being sent to early graves by a foolish and criminal forcing of their infant intellects. Have we not all seen little prodigies displayed before us? We must confess that in our experience—and it extends over a good many years—we have never known those little geniuses to make any great figure in their after life. The

cause is evident. The poor little brain was overworked. Its strings were snapped asunder, if we may so express ourselves, and afterwards yield no sound to the touch. The harmony was gone, and nothing remained but the grosser part of poor humanity.

We would also say to the infant school-mistress—punish as seldom as possible. In fact, we believe that except for a breach of truth, the infant should never receive corporal punishment. Always let your punishments be public. Suspend the business and announce to the whole school what you are going to punish for. Point out the enormity of the crime committed in suitable terms, and you are sure to make an impression on the tender minds.—*The Irish Teachers' Journal*.

The Decoration of School-Rooms.

Hitherto, as far as I know, it has either been so difficult to give all the education we wanted to our lads, that we have been obliged to do it, if at all, with cheap furniture in bare walls; or else we have considered that cheap furniture and bare walls are a proper part of the means of education; and supposed that boys learned best when they sat on hard forms, and had nothing but blank plaster about and above them whereupon to employ their spare attention; also, that it was as well they should be accustomed to rough and ugly conditions of things, partly by way of preparing them for the hardships of life, and partly that there might be the least possible damage done to floors and forms, in the event of their becoming, during the master's absence, the fields or instruments of battle. All this is so far well and necessary, as it relates to the training of country lads, and the first training of boys in general. But there certainly comes a period in the life of a well-educated youth, in which one of the principal elements of his education is, or ought to be, to give him refinement of habits; and not only to teach him the strong exercises of which his frame is capable, but also to increase his bodily sensibility and refinement, and show him such small matters as the way of handling things properly, and treating them considerably. Not only so, but I believe the notion of fixing the attention by keeping the room empty, is a wholly mistaken one: I think it is just in the emptiest room that the mind wanders most; for it gets restless like a bird for want of a perch, and casts about for any possible means for getting out and away. And even if it be fixed, by an effort, on the business in hand, that business itself becomes repulsive, more than it need be, by the vileness of its association; and many a study appears dull or painful to a boy, when it is pursued on a blotted deal desk, under a wall with nothing on it but scratches and pegs, which would have been pursued pleasantly enough in a curtained corner of his father's library, or at the latticed window of his cottage. Nay, my own belief is, that the best study of all is the most beautiful; and that the quiet glade of a forest or the nook of a lake-shore, are worth all the school-rooms in Christendom, when once you are past the multiplication table; but be that as it may, there is no question at all but that a time ought to come in the life of a well-trained youth, when he can sit at a writing-table, without wanting to throw the inkstand at his neighbor; and when also, he will feel more capable of certain efforts of mind with beautiful and refined forms about him than with ugly ones. When that time comes he ought to be advanced into the decorated schools; and this advance ought to be one of the important and honorable epochs of his life.

I have not time, however, to insist on the mere serviceableness to our youth of refined architectural decorations, as such; for I want you to consider the probable influence of the particular kind of decoration which I wish you to get for them—namely, historical painting. You know we have hitherto been in the habit of conveying all our historical knowledge, such as it is, by the ear only, never by the eye; all our notions of things being ostensibly derived from verbal description, not from sight. Now, I have no doubt that as we grow gradually wiser—and we are doing so every day—we shall discover at last that the eye is